

Majali calls on diplomatic missions to assist expatriates

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Sunday called on the Foreign Ministry to give diplomatic missions greater authority in finalising and speeding up formalities concerning Jordanian citizens living abroad and in issuing visas to foreign nationals.

Dr. Majali, who attended part of a weekly ministry meeting chaired by Foreign Minister Jawad Anani, said everything possible should be done to boost Jordan's reputation abroad.

He also urged Foreign Ministry staff to help bolster Jordan's economic, cultural and political relations with the various countries of the world.

Referring to embassies in Arab states, Dr. Majali said mission heads should hold periodic meetings with representatives of the Jordanian expatriate community to learn about their general condition, complaints and work and living conditions. Diplomatic missions should offer Jordanians abroad whatever facilities are required, he said, to serve as a link between the expatriates and their homeland.

The Foreign Ministry, he added, is also called on to continue providing embassies abroad with news on social, political and economic developments in Jordan.

Dr. Anani reviewed the ministry's plans for development, as well as the ongoing cooperation between Jordanian embassies and the ministry.



SHEEP FOR SALE: Bedouin shepherds offer their sheep for sale Sunday to pilgrims at a roadside in Amman ahead of the upcoming Muslim festival of Eid Al Adha, which commemorates the Koranic patriarch Abraham's sacrifice of a sheep in place of his son Ismail. Muslims all over the world sacrifice sheep during the festival (Reuters photo)

Communist Party threatens legal action against Zayaddine over funding allegations

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordanian Communist Party (JCP) has threatened to take its veteran leader Yacoub Zayaddine to court over his recent allegations that party leaders have received "huge amounts of money" from U.S. agencies.

"The party will deal with such accusations seriously and examine them in all aspects," a JCP statement said yesterday.

"We will defend the party's reputation through all legitimate means and we will never allow the defamation of its history or the tarnishing of its members' reputation," it added. JCP members read with "anger and pain" an article by Dr. Zayaddine, published in the Arabic daily Al Arab Al Yawm on March 31, alleging that "the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has infiltrated the oldest political parties, such as the JCP, by giving huge amounts of money to some of their leaders."

In a column published in the latest issue of the Arabic weekly Al Majd, Dr. Zayaddine reiterated his allegations, expressing regret that political parties should rely on financial

assistance from the CIA, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), or other North American agencies for their survival.

JCP Secretary General Munir Hamarneh said Dr. Zayaddine had been asked "two or three times" to present evidence of his allegations before the Control Committee of the party, but "never showed up."

"Various bodies in the party are investigating the matter," Dr. Hamarneh told the Jordan Times, reiterating the JCP's determination to take legal action against Dr. Zayaddine.

Dr. Zayaddine was not immediately available for comment. JCP sources declined to comment when asked whether they knew the basis on which Dr. Zayaddine formulated his accusations.

Dr. Zayaddine, 76, has been a prominent actor on Jordan's political stage for over four decades. He won the Jerusalem seat in the 1956 parliamentary elections and was JCP secretary general for 10 years, from 1987-1997.

During the party's last elections, in December, he turned down a re-election bid due to his age and his desire "to give younger

comrades the chance to reach leadership positions as part of change."

Founded in 1951, the JCP was outlawed until the introduction of the 1992 Political Parties Law.

Though many of its leaders, including Dr. Zayaddine, were sentenced to long prison terms for political reasons, the JCP managed to operate underground during the 1957-1989 ban on political parties.

In previous interviews with the Jordan Times, Dr. Zayaddine cited as a major political achievement his success in keeping the party united after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which dealt a heavy blow to communist groups world-wide.

He also said he was particularly proud of having successfully led the party through the internal divisions sparked by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.

The 1990-1991 Gulf crisis divided the JCP ranks, with some communists opposing Baghdad's move, and others supporting it.

The JCP has one deputy in the 80-seat Lower House, Mohammad Bataineh (Irbid), who ran as independent in last November's general elections.

Minister denies reports of Jordanian-Israeli water sharing agreement

By Ramadan Rawashdeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan on Sunday denied an Israeli newspaper report alleging that Israel and Jordan reached a secret agreement on water sharing during a meeting in Tel Aviv between His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the report in the Haaretz newspaper about a Jordanian-Israeli accord to share the water of Lake Tiberias was baseless. He added that the Palestinians have their own share in the lake's waters.

Dr. Haddadin also denied an allegation by the Israeli military analyst in Haaretz about a secret deal between Jordan and Israel allowing

unspecified quantities of water to be drawn from the Jordan River north of Lake Tiberias to an Israeli pipeline. He said this is not an issue that should be discussed by Israel and Jordan, adding that should Jordan be approached about it, the Kingdom would reject it outright.

Haaretz had said that in order to prevent the lake from overflowing with the additional waters from the Yarmouk, Israel would divert water from the Jordan River directly into Israel's national water carrier.

In earlier remarks Sunday, Dr. Haddadin said Israel has shown signs of responding to Jordan's requests concerning storing water from the Yarmouk River.

During his recent visit to Amman, Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon discussed the issue of storing water from the Yarmouk

River in Lake Tiberias, according to the minister.

"We want to improve the efficiency of diverting Yarmouk waters toward the King Abdullah Canal, and this is what I discussed with Sharon," Dr. Haddadin said. He said this work constitutes part of the Wahdeh Dam project.

Israeli radio Saturday quoted the Israeli newspaper Haaretz as saying that Jordan and Israel will agree on increasing the amount of water drawn from the Yarmouk River to Lake Tiberias.

"By signing the 1994 peace treaty, we secured facilities for storing up to 20 million cubic metres of water in the lake, and we have asked the Israelis to increase this amount because the dam that was supposed to be built on the Yarmouk River has been postponed until a compre-

hensive peace settlement has been concluded on all tracks," the minister said.

"The Israeli radio report is a good sign and we are awaiting a final answer from the Israeli side," he added.

Asked about the advantages for Jordan from this project, Dr. Haddadin said: "It is important for farming in the Jordan Valley, and the additional amount of water would enable the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to pump up to 90 million cubic metres of water to Amman and 20 million to the Irbid governorate."

"If Israel has responded to the Jordanian requests, that would be a cause for delight," added the minister.

The 1994 peace treaty between Israel and Jordan provides for storing water from the Yarmouk River in Lake Tiberias for agricultural use in the Jordan Valley.

Water Authority signs agreements for sewage networks

AMMAN (Petra) — The Water Authority of Jordan (WAO) Sunday signed three agreements with two Jordanian firms and an American company to carry out a sewage network project in the Wadi Musa district, close to the ancient Nabataean city of Petra.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin, who signed the contracts along with representatives of the three companies, said the project consists of three parts: a water treatment plant, pumping stations to send treated water to Wadi Musa, Taibeh and Bedouh, and a network of sewers in the three closely located towns.

Dr. Haddadin said the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will cover 90 per cent of the cost of the JD25 million project, which will take two years to complete.

USAID Director in Jordan Lewis Lucke said the agency is providing assistance to this project in view of the historical and touristic importance of the region and the project's benefit to the Jordanian economy.

He said 1.25 million cubic metres of treated water will be produced for irrigation purposes.

While the two Jordanian firms will be involved in laying the sewage networks and pumping stations, the American firm will construct the wastewater treatment plant.

Press association president asks for consultations on draft law

AMMAN (Petra) — The president of the Jordan Press Association (JPA), Seif Sharif, has requested that the JPA be consulted by the government and Parliament on the provisions of the new draft Press and Publications Law.

Mr. Sharif, who was speaking at a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information Abdullah Ensour, said the JPA's views are important on this issue because the draft law affects not only the JPA, but the general media as well.

Referring to the ongoing cooperation between the Ministry of Information, the government and Parliament over a new draft law governing the JPA, Mr. Sharif said it is hoped that such cooperation will extend to other relevant laws.

Mr. Sharif requested that the government support the JPA's pension fund, which he said is similar to a policy adopted by numerous Arab countries. He added that the

dissolution of this fund, which seems probable now due to meagre resources, would deal a strong blow to the association.

He also asked that the government back the JPA's drive to require that journalists join the association so that the JPA board can protect and promote the profession.

Dr. Ensour said in reply that no democratic country forces people to acquire membership in associations, adding that membership should remain optional.

However, he said, the ministry will wait for the higher council's interpretation of the constitution to clarify this point.

Dr. Ensour requested that the JPA develop proposals on this matter for discussion with deputies in the Lower House of Parliament.

The minister assured the journalists that the government would not interfere in the association's internal affairs or the profession

except to help the JPA shoulder its responsibilities.

The minister urged journalists to exercise restraint with their publications, avoid slandering anyone in Jordan or abroad and refrain from publishing articles that would promote sectarianism, harm national unity or offend social morals.

He said the press should respect the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian people and should refrain from leveling insults at Arab leaders because, he added, such behaviour harms Jordan's relations with other countries.

At the meeting, which was attended by JPA board members and heads of official information services, discussion covered issues of concern to the association such as the acquisition of a plot of land that was donated by His Majesty King Hussein and the creation of a higher press council to help promote journalism in Jordan.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King visits senator in hospital

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Sunday visited Senator Akf Fayez who is recuperating at the Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery. King Hussein received assurances on Mr. Fayez' health and wished him a speedy recovery.

Artillery corps to mark 'Eid with gunfire

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Artillery Corps will fire guns from the Jabal Qalaa and Umm Al Summaq areas as part of 'Eid Al Adha festivities. The gun discharges will begin Monday evening and will take place at each prayer time until the end of the 'Eid.

what's going on

FILMS
* "La Fievre Monte à El Pao" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS
* Exhibition of electrical equipment, home appliances, clothing, perfume, sweets (marking the advent of 'Eid Al Adha) at the University of Jordan, until April 7.
* Paintings on handmade paper at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Sagra St. (Tel. 5699141/2), until April 25.
* Modern Jordanian Ceramics by Raed Al Dahleh at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until April 10.
* Works by Jordanian artist Youssef Baddawi at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh until April 9 (Tel. 4643251/2). Also displaying a private collection of Mandooh Bisharat entitled "A Vision, An Identity," and works by contemporary Arab artists — "The New Collection."

Man in custody for shooting co-worker

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police are questioning a 35-year-old man in connection with the shooting death of his fellow worker at the Ramtha border station on Saturday, according to an official source.

The source told the Jordan Times Sunday that the suspect, Awad M., allegedly opened fire at his fellow employee, Omar R., 36, in

their boss's office over work-related feuds.

"The suspect had several arguments with the victim on Thursday over a vehicle which was waiting to cross the border. Omar allowed it to enter, but the suspect had initially refused to allow it to pass," the source said.

On Saturday, he maintained, the issue was brought up again between the two

and the border's director intervened in the matter and tried to calm them.

"However, the argument became heated and Awad drew his gun and shot Omar seven times in the chest, killing him instantly," the source added.

Police contacted by the Jordan Times confirmed the incident but refused comment.

Honour crimes seminar ends with call for women's centre

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A seminar tackling the increasing number of "honour crimes" in Jordan has called for the immediate opening of a specialised women's protection and rehabilitation centre operating on a 24-hour basis.

The centre "should be established as soon as possible," said a statement issued on Saturday, five days after a seminar on crimes of honour ended.

According to official figures, a total of 25 crimes of honour were reported in 1997, compared to 19 in 1996 and 20 in 1995. But independent experts say the figures could be higher because not all cases are reported.

In the crimes that have been condemned at home and abroad, a male often kills his sister or cousin on suspicion of an illicit relationship to cleanse the family honour. The suspects benefit from a reduction in court sentences granted by the law, which does not treat these crimes as premeditated murders.

The two-day seminar, organised by the Jordanian Women's Union, Alkarbah Research and Training Centre and the Terre Des Hommes Humanitarian Agency, hosted over 10 experts and sociologists who submitted studies

focusing on the phenomenon, reasons prompting it and ways to minimise or end it.

The seminar also examined means of changing several lenient laws that experts say encourage such crimes.

They also focused on ways to improve the role of the media in spreading popular awareness to help reduce these crimes.

Delegates issued several recommendations including allowing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to intervene in cases of family violence, offering free legal help for abused women and enforcing international human rights conventions which Jordan has signed.

They also stressed the need to increase training courses for social counsellors.

One recommendation demanded the often conservative media "to start playing a more responsible role in joining the fight against honour crimes, establishing better communications with the underprivileged sectors and promoting awareness on human rights."

Most importantly, radio and television programmes should work on "changing the negative image of women and children in the media and providing direct counselling lines for victims of violence and abuse."

During the seminar, specialists expressed concern over the increase in the number of honour crimes over the past 10 years. According to reports by the Forensic Medicine Department, these crimes have ranked highest among all murders committed in the country.

Certain controversial articles in Jordan's civil law address such crimes in a lenient way, thus helping boost such crimes, according to some human rights activists.

Article 340 of the civil law could exonerate those who commit such crimes. It stipulates that "the who discovers his wife or one of his female relatives committing adultery and kills, wounds, or injures one or both of them, is exempted from any penalty, or benefits from a sentence reduction."

Article 98 states that "the who commits a crime in a moment of fury caused by a dangerous act on the part of the victim," also benefits from a penalty reduction.

However, if situation were reversed, a woman would not benefit from any penalty reduction.

Most experts and women rights activists attending the seminar called for annulling these laws and for implementing stricter rules to save women from "such heinous crimes."



A sampling of some of the pottery on display at the Noor Al Hussein Foundation. The crafts on display at the exhibition were produced under a development project (Photo courtesy of Noor Al Hussein Foundation)

Popular handmade paper art on display at crafts exhibit

By Dima Hamdan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An exhibition of pottery, various styles of hand-made paper and textiles produced under a Swiss-funded development project for the Wadi Seer villages near Amman is currently on display at the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF).

The project was launched in 1994 to help improve living conditions on several levels and to create income-generating projects for women in the Iraq Al Amir area.

In a bid to promote the hand-made paper, which is produced from plants without chemical additives, the NHF invited 15

Jordanian and foreign artists to use this paper in their work.

The artists, including Ghada Dahdaleh, Omar Hamdan, Ali Maher, Dodi Taba'a, and Adnan Sharif, creatively employed the hand-made paper in various works.

A Swiss artist went further by developing black and white photographs on the paper.

The paper is also being used extensively in note books, silk screens, Arabic calligraphy, boxes and greeting cards.

Hand-made textiles have also been employed in order to insure a consistent income for the women of Iraq Al Amir. Artists used it to make vests, jackets,

pillows, upholstery and other small items.

Jordanian artist Hazem Zobi trained some women on how to use the "wheel" in making pottery, a variety of which is exhibited at the foundation.

Hand-made paper, however, seems to be the most popular project among the women of Iraq Al Amir, NHF officials said.

Thanks to the publicity extended by the foundation, this product is now well-known to designers and artists, who are now placing orders for their private work.

The exhibition at the Foundation's Design and Craft Centre will run until April 25.

Yeltsin looks for Duma to back PM

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin believes he has parliamentary backing for his prime ministerial nominee and is counting on the state Duma confirming Sergei Kiriyenko in the post this week, Interfax news agency said Sunday.

But the agency, quoting an unnamed official on Mr. Yeltsin's staff, said that if the lower house rejected Mr. Kiriyenko in a first vote, the president would immediately renominate him.

"The president is firm in his intention to put forward Sergei Kiriyenko for parliamentary approval as many times as necessary for Sergei Kiriyenko to become premier," Interfax quoted the official as saying.

If the Duma rejects three nominations, new parliamentary elections are automatically triggered under the constitution. The first confirmation hearing is expected Friday.

"President Boris Yeltsin is counting on Sergei

Kiriyenko being confirmed as premier at the first vote in the Duma," Interfax said.

"The president is basing this on the exchange of views with the speaker of the state Duma, Gennady Seleznyov, and the speaker of the Federation Council (upper house) Yegor Stroyev."

Mr. Yeltsin met Mr. Seleznyov, a Communist, and Mr. Stroyev Thursday and offered to hold round-table talks with political leaders Tuesday, to hear the views of opposition groups on the formation of the new government.

"The leaders of the two houses, after difficult discussions, agreed with the president's reasoning and in principle did not rule out the possibility of Sergei Kiriyenko being confirmed as early as the first vote," Interfax said.

Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov said Thursday his party, the biggest group in the Duma but short of a majority, would reject Mr. Kiriyenko,

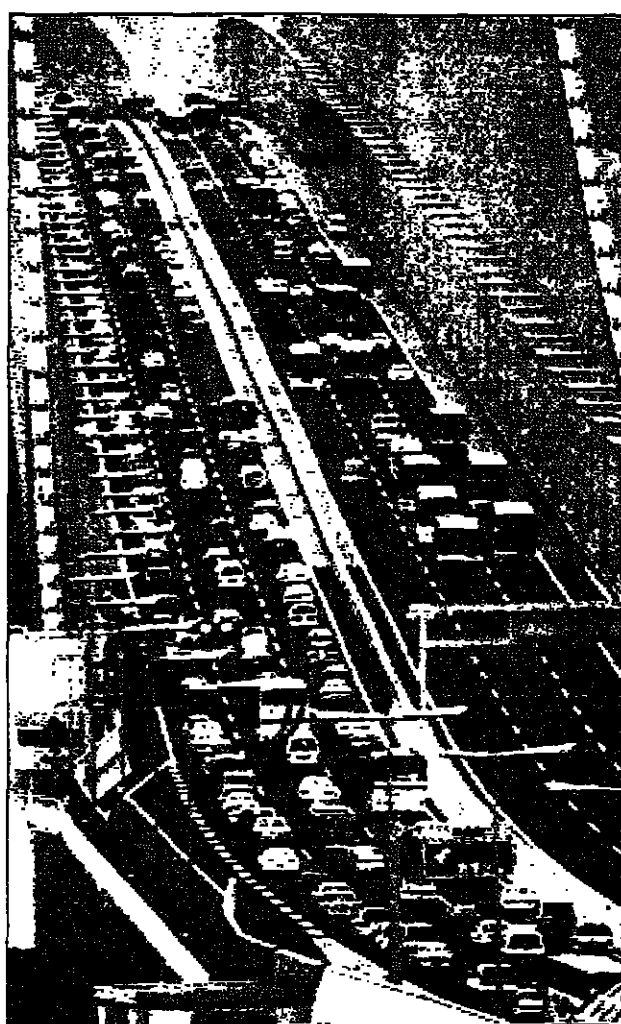
35. three times if necessary. He said the nominee lacked experience and would not change the free market policies of his predecessor, Viktor Chernomyrdin.

But neither the Communists nor the Kremlin seem really to want elections called more than 18 months ahead of schedule.

Interfax quoted the Kremlin aide as saying Mr. Yeltsin was keen to see the "spirit of non-confrontational cooperation with parliament" which marked roundtable talks last December.

The speakers agreed with Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Kiriyenko to set up joint government-parliament working groups to discuss the most difficult economic and social issues, the agency said.

If the Duma voted against Mr. Kiriyenko, Mr. Yeltsin would send a new formal nomination letter for the same candidate "within an hour" of the rejection, the Kremlin aide added.



Vehicles queue after the opening of the Akashi Kaikyo Bridge, the world's longest suspension bridge in Kobe, western Japan. The new 3,911-metre bridge spans the Akashi Strait linking Kobe and Awaji Island and has a main span of 1,991 metres, making it the world's longest suspension bridge (Reuters photo)

Japan opens world's longest suspension bridge

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan opened the world's longest suspension bridge Sunday after 10 years work and a cost of almost \$10 billion, amid questions from some analysts about what purpose it serves.

Crown Prince Naruhito and Princess Masako attended the official opening of the 3,911-metre-long Akashi Kaikyo bridge across the Akashi Strait between Japan's main island of Honshu and the southwestern island of Shikoku.

The road bridge's central span of 1,991 metres exceeds the Humber bridge in Britain, the Great Belt East bridge in Denmark and the Tsing Ma bridge in Hong Kong.

It opened to the public late Sunday following a series of ceremonies, the Honshu-Shikoku Bridge Authority said.

The 1.3 trillion yen (\$9.7 billion) bridge, the last mammoth Japanese project this century, was launched in 1988 before the economy started to stagnate.

It connects the city of Kobe and Awaji Island in the strait and forms part of the 89-kilometre expressway through Shikoku.

The project was in danger after an earthquake devastated Kobe and other western Japanese cities in January 1995.

Work was suspended for about a month as the epicentre of the quake was just south-west of the southern end of the bridge. The contractor found the bridge had to be stretched by 1.1 metres because the quake shifted the piers.

The authority said the bridge was designed to withstand an earthquake measuring 8.5 on the Richter scale, compared with 7.2 on the scale recorded around Kobe where more than 6,000 people died.

The toll for cars has been set at 3,250 yen but will be lowered to 2,600 yen during the first five years to encourage usage.

Recession-hit local businesses expect much from the project.

Daiwa Bank Research Institute estimated the long-term impact of the bridge on

the regional economy to be worth 150 billion yen. The institute said Shikoku Island was expected to earn an extra 12 billion yen a year thanks to the bridge.

Local governments forecast the number of tourists visiting the region will increase from 1.6 million to 2.3 million.

But some analysts are pessimistic about the impact. "We have not seen any companies out of the region planning to build new facilities here or announcing new investment for the past few years," said Yoshiaki Kume, an analyst at Tokushima Regional Research Institute.

"Residents' expectations of the bridge are also not so high," the analyst added.

Takayoshi Igarashi, a professor at Hosei University, said such big projects were unlikely to help boost the economy once construction is completed, adding they were more likely to increase the financial burden for people in the end.

"Japan had better stop relying on a public works-led economic recovery," the professor said.

Because of the economic slowdown, the operator is expected to face difficulties in recovering the huge investment.

The authority will manage three bridges across the strait when another one is completed next year. It is already four trillion yen in debt.

Analysts warn that local governments may face extra spending to reduce the debt.

The authority forecast 30,000 cars would use the bridge a day, but analysts said traffic volume would be lowered due to the slump.

Japan experienced a boom in big projects in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Kansai International Airport was completed in 1994 on a man-made island and the world's longest undersea road tunnel under Tokyo Bay opened last December.

But after the property bubble burst, many local governments were forced to reassess vastly inflated estimates of returns from mega-projects in the light of economic realities.

Belgium calls Kinshasa accusations irresponsible

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Guns seized by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were about to be returned to Belgium under an open agreement with Kinshasa, the Belgian foreign ministry said Sunday, dismissing charges of arms smuggling.

The sudden seizure, which came after Belgium criticised the DRC for shutting down a human rights organisation, was an "irresponsible way of proceeding," unless there had been a "misunderstanding of the affair," foreign ministry spokesman Andre Querton said.

DRC state television showed pictures of assault rifles and hand guns which, it claimed, were destined for the Belgian consulate at Lubumbashi, the country's second city and centre of the mining industry, in the south.

"It would not be excessive to list (Belgium) among ter-

rorist countries," said Ignace Makeba, chief aide to Information Minister Raphael Ghenda, describing the incident as a "scandal" and a "provocation" while alleging that plots were being hatched against Mr. Kabila.

But Mr. Querton was quoted by the Belga news agency as saying that the weapons shown were about to be returned Saturday to Belgium with the permission of the DRC authorities. They had belonged to four Belgian soldiers who were sent to Lubumbashi last year to protect Belgian nationals during the rebellion of now President Laurent Kabila. Mr. Querton said.

Mr. Querton said the soldiers were in Lubumbashi with the permission of both Mr. Kabila and the then president, Mobutu Sese Seko, whom Mr. Kabila ousted in May after a seven-

month rebellion.

After Lubumbashi fell to the rebels, the soldiers returned to Belgium, the former colonial power in the DRC, but left their weapons behind, the foreign ministry spokesman said, adding that their return had been negotiated with the Kinshasa authorities.

But at the last minute the two cases of weapons were seized and picked up by the television cameras, said Mr. Querton, stressing that Belgium had "always shown transparency and good will in this old matter."

Earlier Saturday, Belgium's Foreign Minister Erik Derycke said the banning of the Zairian Association for the Defence of Human Rights (AZAD-HO) Friday was "a new negative signal" of the Kinshasa government's attitude to human rights, a spokesman said.

Frenzied reaction in Britain to paedophile's release

LONDON (AFP) — The scheduled release of a notorious paedophile Monday has stirred public passions in Britain to a frenzy, fuelled by sensational press warnings over "child-killers" and "monsters."

The climate of fear and outrage has been growing steadily in the run-up to the release of "child-killer" Sydney Cooke, 69, after serving 10 years in prison for the particularly grisly murder of a 14-year-old boy.

Another five convicted paedophiles are due to be released soon after Cooke, sparking a wave of general panic.

"Watch out for this evil pervert," thundered the tabloid Sun newspaper, which carried a front-page photo of "the monster."

"He'll be freed in days and could be coming to your neighbourhood."

The country's best-selling newspaper also invited its readers to telephone a special hot-line with any sightings of Cooke, so that his movements could be tracked at all times.

With a protest planned at the gates of Cooke's prison Monday, the authorities are being forced to take special measures to protect him

from possible assault.

According to press reports, Cooke may have been transferred to another detention facility, or even released secretly ahead of time Saturday.

Once out of jail, Cooke has been convinced by police of the wisdom of staying, at least temporarily, in supervised accommodation and wearing an electronic tracking bracelet.

Around 30 police officers have been assigned to maintain a 24-hour watch on Cooke.

Britain's Labour government, which has pushed itself as champion of the fight against crime, has contributed to the general hysteria with an anti-paedophile campaign that some critics have judged excessive.

For the last seven months, all convicted paedophiles have had their names listed on a national register and are required — under the threat of another prison term — to notify police of any change of address.

The register is meant to be confidential, but a police official admitted recently that details were sometimes released.

In some cases "it may be that the only way of protect-

ing the population is to put that information in the public domain," said the official, who asked not to be identified.

Last year, another convicted paedophile who knew Cooke, Robert Oliver, was relentlessly pursued for weeks after his release from prison by a pack of tabloid reporters and neighbourhood self-defence committees.

After trying to settle in six different towns, Oliver was finally reduced to seeking refuge for four months in police cells in the southern seaside town of Brighton.

The situation has sparked concern among those dealing with released offenders.

"The hint and sometimes the reality of vigilantism actually increases the risk to the community," one probation officer said.

"If they are driven underground and hounded from pillar to post then that has to increase the risk," he added.

Public anxiety over Oliver and Cooke has been compounded by the fact that neither is obliged to undergo psychological treatment after release. A law imposing such treatment was passed in 1992, but did not apply to people jailed before that date.

PM opens Glory of India Hindu temple

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee Sunday opened an imposing Hindu temple in which life-size robots reenact scenes from ancient Hindu texts.

Mr. Vajpayee, who took office last month, spent around 45 minutes at the marble-and-granite complex built at a cost of about \$6 million in New Delhi's southern fringes.

Hundreds of angry men and women jostled with police outside after failing to gain entry despite invitations from the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), the organisers.

Mr. Vajpayee's elite commandos enforced tight security at the site.

The "Glory of India" temple uses Western tech-

nology to promote Hindu religious themes. Robots which are mobile from the waist up depict scenes from Hindu scriptures while computerised special effects have also been used.

"ISKCON will be the forerunner in the use of modern day technology for preserving the spiritual truths of India," said an organiser. "The robots in the complex have been made in the United States."

Hindus form the overwhelming majority of India's 960 million people. ISKCON, also known as the Hare Krishna movement worldwide, was founded in New York in the 1960s by an Indian.

It boasts 500 centres worldwide, including farms and temples.

10 students drowned on Yangtze River

BEIJING (R) — Ten Chinese students drowned when their boat capsized on the Yangtze River during a school outing, state radio reported Sunday.

The accident occurred when 15 middle school students crowded on to a boat built to carry 10 as it crossed the Yangtze Friday near Da County, in the southwestern province of Sichuan, the radio report said.

The owner of the boat, a fishing vessel which was not licensed to take passengers, and two of the teachers supervising 160 students during the outing were detained after the mishap, the report said.

French woman killed, boyfriend seriously injured in Swiss village

DELEMONT, Switzerland (AFP) — A French woman was killed and her boyfriend seriously injured after they were shot early Sunday morning in a village in northeast Switzerland, cantonal

police involved three French nationals, occurred in the town of Goumois, in the canton of Jura.

The assailant, who fled after the shooting, was later nabbed near the scene of the shooting following a massive manhunt launched by customs authorities and

police. Police said preliminary information pointed to a "crime of passion." No other details of the incident were immediately available.

Police said they had launched a full investigation.

Plans to topple the S. African government 'will be squashed'

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Any "sinister plans" to topple South Africa's blacked government by disgruntled whites would be squashed, President Nelson Mandela told a Sunday newspaper, after a report of a coup plot was dismissed.

"I am completely in control of the situation. I have complete faith in the security forces," Mr. Mandela told the Afrikaans Rapport in a wide-ranging interview Sunday.

"I am confident that whatever sinister plans there may be out there, we can quickly wipe them out."

His remarks came after a team of top judges last week dismissed a report written by Military Intelligence (MI) of a left-wing coup plot.

Defence force head General Georg Meiring in February handed in the report implicating the deputy chief of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

Lieutenant-General Siphiwe Nyanda, and Mr. Mandela's ex-wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, in a plot.

An axe is hanging over Gen. Meiring's head because he has failed to adequately explain how the report was drawn up.

"When I received the (Military Intelligence) report, I immediately noticed that there was not one white implicated in the plot," Mr. Mandela told the paper Sunday.

And some of those implicated were in line to take senior positions in the army when the old guard moved out anyway, he said.

"This made me very suspicious and so I asked the judges to investigate."

Asked whether he thought there could be other groups planning to topple the government, Mr. Mandela said that when changes such as are happening in South Africa take place those in the minority often became worried.

"They feel unsafe. This is also happening in our country. That is why there is that tendency to see if they can bring back the old dispensation, especially whites who

lost their power."

"Some people are unhappy with the current dispensation. We are aware that there is a lot going on," he said.

Mr. Mandela added: "We have sympathy with such forces because we know it is not easy when, for three centuries you have held power, then you wake up one morning to find that you have lost everything."

He said white "South Africans hadn't lost all their apartheid privileges and still held enormous influence, especially because they were so skilled."

"I tell my colleagues in the government and the leadership of the ANC that we did not defeat the whites on a battlefield; you cannot treat them as if they are flat on the ground where we can dictate to them."

"If you try and do that, even that small group of people will stand up and try and reduce the country to ashes."

"We must handle them with respect, as a whole part of the community which must be involved in decision making."

He said the African National Congress welcomed opposition political parties, but "unfortunately we (have) an opposition which is not at all loyal to the country."

A sense of new patriotism had not yet reached the opposition.

"We welcome opposition, because it is the cornerstone of democracy. We welcome a powerful and fearless press."

Meanwhile, the City Press newspaper reported Sunday that Gen. Meiring has been briefed he should resign or be sacked after SANDF generals, who were part of the former liberation armies, claimed to know that he was part of the team that drew up the dismissed report.

The newspaper said MI — which is made up almost entirely of elements from the previous regime — could be also disbanded in the wake of the coup plot debacle.

The Sunday Independent also said a purge of MI and the defence force was looming.

ETA planned to kill 3 rightwing politicians

MADRID (AFP) — The armed Basque separatist group ETA attempted to murder three rightwing local politicians of a town in southern Spain last year, the Madrid daily El Pais reported Sunday.

An ETA suspect arrested last month told Spanish police of the group's attempt to murder three local representatives in the Andalusian town of Rincon de La Victoria, near Malaga, on Sept. 8, the report said.

Mikel Azurmendi Penagarikano, known as Hankas, told the paramilitary police that bombs had been placed under the cars of the town's mayor, Jose Maria Gomez Munoz, and a local councillor, Francisco Robles Aguilar.

The explosive devices had been found by accident and defused.

Mr. Hankas admitted that he had also tried to place a bomb underneath the car of local politician Jose Antonio Lemonge, but gave up when he realised the vehicle was equipped with an electronic alarm.

According to El Pais, the former member of the feared Andalusia Commando, dismantled on March 21, also told Spanish authorities that ETA had tried to rob an explosive deposit near the northwestern French city of Rennes.

A group of four or five militants, including ETA leader Juan Maria Iñsausti Mugica known as "Karpov," had tried to break through a wall of the arsenal building but an alarm had sounded forcing them to retreat.

Many feared dead, 90 saved in boat fire on Amazon

SAO PAULO (R) — Brazilian authorities said at least 90 people were rescued after a river boat caught fire on an Amazon tributary Saturday, but it was unclear how many were missing due to the lack of a passenger list.

Police in the Amazonian capital of Manaus said 74 passengers on board the Almirante Moreira, which caught fire at about 9 a.m.

local time (1300 GMT) were taken to the local hospital, while 16 left after the accident without injuries.

"Our rescue team at the site has not reported any deaths," said Capt. Helcio Motta in Manaus.

But Brazilian media reported at least three people were feared dead and that local police were continuing their search under the assumption

that between 30 and 70 people could be missing.

Many were feared swept away in the swift current of the river, a major tributary that flows northeast into the Amazon, and travels at about 20 km in the area where the boat exploded.

"My friend jumped into the water after catching fire and was not seen after that. I think he is dead," witness Lucio

Coercio told Globo television.

Miguel Vital, police chief in the nearby town of Nova Olinda do Norte, told Reuters earlier that some 130 people could have been aboard the boat, but he could not be sure since no list existed. He could not confirm any reports on deaths.

The boat caught fire while making its regular run on the

Madeira River from Manaus to Rondonia state's Porto Velho.

Capt. Motta said the fire erupted in the kitchen, but could not give further details.

A rescue team of police, medics and divers flew into the area from Manaus, Brazil's main Amazon River port, about 160 miles away, to help an undersized team of local police and firemen.



Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is in Haiti for a visit. (Reuters photo)

Albright with Haiti

WASHINGTON (R) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is in Haiti for a visit, the first by a U.S. official since the 1994 intervention. Albright is expected to meet with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and other officials. She will also visit the site of the 1994 massacre of thousands of Haitians. Albright's visit is part of a broader effort to strengthen U.S. relations with Haiti and to promote human rights. She is also expected to discuss the situation in the Balkans and the Middle East. Albright's visit is expected to last several days.

Majority polled want Starr to drop Clinton

WASHINGTON (R) — A new poll shows that a majority of Americans want Attorney General Eric Starr to drop the investigation into President Bill Clinton's alleged affair with a White House intern. The poll, conducted by ABC News and the Washington Post, found that 54 percent of respondents want Starr to drop the case, while 45 percent want him to continue. The poll also found that 68 percent of respondents believe Clinton is innocent, while 31 percent believe he is guilty. The poll is the latest in a series of surveys on the Clinton case. It shows that public opinion is divided, but that a majority of Americans want the investigation to end.



U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is greeted by President Rene Preval at the National Palace. Albright is in Haiti to support efforts to resolve Haiti's political crisis (Reuters photo)

Albright disappointed with Haiti's leaders

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (R) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright expressed disappointment Saturday with Haitian leaders' inability to end a long-standing political impasse holding up badly needed international aid.

Mrs. Albright's one-day visit to the impoverished nation came nearly 10 months after Prime Minister Rosny Smarth resigned amid a continuing electoral dispute that has brought normal government functioning to a standstill.

"Frankly, we have been disappointed that Haiti's political leaders have taken so long to resolve their differences," Mrs. Albright said.

It was the second visit she had made in six months to promote a resolution to the crisis.

At Haiti's national palace, Mrs. Albright met with President Rene Preval, discussing the crisis, the rule of law and economic reform.

She also met with party leaders at the centre of the deadlock, including Officials of the People's Organisation in the struggle (OPL) and former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who heads the Fanmi Lavalas party.

OPL contested senatorial seats won by Fanmi Lavalas candidates in a vote last April.

Legislators still fuming over alleged fraud during the April elections have

rejected both Preval's nominees to replace Mr. Smarth as prime minister.

Half of Mr. Smarth's ministers have since resigned, leaving the rest doubling up on their responsibilities in caretaker roles.

"I'm very proud of the role the U.S. has played," she said, recalling human rights abuses and masses of boat people under a 1992-93 government installed by military coup.

Mrs. Albright promised U.S. assistance in preparing national elections scheduled for November despite the current electoral controversy.

She also announced the appointment of David Aaron, undersecretary of commerce for international trade, as chairman of a national security council committee on Haitian economic growth.

"Ambassador Aaron will be working to mobilise agencies within the U.S. government and private sector, with their counterparts here in Haiti, to promote investment growth and sound financial management," she said.

After her talks with Haitian leaders, Mrs. Albright left for Trinidad and Tobago, where she was scheduled to meet Sunday with Prime Minister Basdeo Pandey.

Monday she is to meet there with the foreign ministers of 15 nations that took part in a Caribbean summit with President Bill Clinton last May.

"The resulting rise in

incomes could raise 1 million Haitians out of poverty," she said.

The Clinton administration has been criticised for its policy in Haiti, but Mrs. Albright called Haiti a foreign policy success.

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"The resulting rise in

S. Korean president accepts meeting with North, hopes for breakthrough

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung Sunday accepted a North Korean proposal for a meeting of high-level government officials and welcomed it as "major progress and a change" in relations.

"We will, of course, take part in the meeting. I hope it will be fruitful," Mr. Kim said in a statement on his return here from the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit in London.

North Korea Saturday offered a vice-ministerial level meeting in Beijing April 11 to discuss fertiliser aid and other issues, the first in four years.

Mr. Kim's comment was Seoul's first official response to the request, made by North Korean Red Cross head Ri Sung-Ho on the telephone hotline through the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) which divides the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. Ri said the North

would send a five-member delegation to Beijing on April 11 "to discuss the provision of fertilisers and other issues of bilateral concern" which Seoul put forward during Red Cross contacts in Beijing last month.

Official government-to-government contact between the two warring Koreas was cut off in July 1994, after the two sides had met to arrange a North-South summit aborted by the death of the North's leader Kim Il-Sung.

Newspapers said a response to the North would be made Monday through the same Red Cross hotline, but officials were unavailable for comment.

Seoul last month said it was ready to help supply 200,000 tonnes of nitrate fertilisers to help the famine-stricken North's crippled agricultural sys-

tem during the crucial spring planting season.

The North suggested the Beijing World Hotel as a convenient venue, but the newspapers here quoted government sources as saying the South favoured the village of Panmunjom on the frontier between the two Koreas.

"It is good to see the North Korean offer, but at the same time we are suspicious ... but we have to take this opportunity to begin productive dialogue and exchanges," the conservative Chosun Ilbo said.

The North's request came a day after a panel of U.S. experts said it estimated that at least one million North Koreans had died of hunger, and the request was seen as a possible signal of desperation in Pyongyang.

The estimate by the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations was published by USA Today, which quoted the experts as

saying they ranked the North's famine in the same category as those in Somalia and Ethiopia.

If it takes place, the meeting would appear to be a major plus for Mr. Kim's new North-South policy spelt out in a speech at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies Sunday.

In the speech, Mr. Kim renewed his pledge to reject any "German-style" absorption of the North by the South, and a strict separation of politics from economic contacts.

Mr. Kim also placed priority on uniting the millions of family members divided by the 1950-53 Korean War in what he called his "sunshine policy."

He said he had already seen "signs of change" since his government took over, including Pyongyang's opening to North Korea's airspace to

international flights, and its toning down of denunciations of the South.

Since the war only one reunion has been held, involving a handful of family members, in 1985. Many have no idea whether relatives are alive or dead.

But observers here warned against expecting too much, noting that time after time North-South overtures have broken down, as they did over food aid in 1995. The North refused to acknowledge that talks at that time, also in Beijing, were official.

North Korea has said its supplies of food grains ran out completely in March. Seoul has pledged 50,000 tonnes of food through U.N. channels, the South Korean Red Cross another 50,000 tonnes, and Mr. Kim said Sunday: "I believe it will be necessary to provide further help in the future."

Warnings issued over upcoming Australian election on race issues

SYDNEY (AFP) — The Australian opposition warned Sunday there would be no winners in a fast-approaching election to be fought over race issues, as a stalemate over Aboriginal land rights legislation persisted.

"In terms of the nation we are all losers, the lot of us," said the opposition's Aboriginal affairs spokesman Daryl Melham.

However, the deadlock looked unlikely to be resolved Sunday, with Prime Minister John Howard saying he was not prepared to back down on what he sees as land rights reform.

"We are prepared now to go to the Australian people and say 'The bill in front of you at the moment is already a compromise and we will compromise no further,'" he told a Liberal Party meeting.

But he downplayed reports the ruling coalition of the Liberal and National parties was gearing up for a snap poll as early as July.

"If I were some of the newspaper commentators I wouldn't get too excited about particular dates," he said.

However, it appeared inevitable that Mr. Howard's threat to go to the polls if the upper house senate does not pass his land rights legislation would be carried out — probably before the end of the year.

The conservative government needs the support of independent Senator Brian Harradine to push its bill through the upper house, where the Labour opposition and minor parties hold a small majority.

Mr. Harradine is demand-

ing changes from the government to aspects of the bill in exchange for his deciding vote.

But Mr. Melham said Mr. Harradine should not be obliged to support the bill in order to avoid a race-based election that commentators agree could be damaging to Australia's multicultural society.

"There's a moral force and a legal force that you shouldn't let this bill through unamended," Mr. Melham said, adding uncertainties within the legislation would create a "lawyer's picnic" afterwards.

Meanwhile, indigenous Australians Sunday unveiled a fund to finance a legal challenge to the government's Wik legislation, as well as to promote reconciliation between black and white Australia.

And in a sign that the simmering land rights debate is becoming increasingly charged, a spokesman for land rights negotiators, Peter Yu, said he agreed with an opposition jibe that Mr. Howard was enjoying "bashing black fellas."

"A lot of Aboriginal people would have similar sentiments in regards to those comments because we haven't seen any sense of generosity or goodwill by the government towards Aboriginal people," he said.

Mr. Howard has demanded an apology from deputy opposition leader Gareth Evans who made the comment after the government won a court case against an Aboriginal tribe which had been seeking to protect a sacred site.

Final countdown to North Ireland peace deal begins

BELFAST (AFP) — The final countdown to Thursday's deadline for a peace deal on Northern Ireland's future begins now, with London and Dublin hoping to present a blueprint settlement to negotiators Monday.

Despite crucial differences remaining between republican and unionist political leaders on the key issue of a north-south body linking Ulster and the Irish Republic, the British and Irish governments are optimistic that a peace agreement will be signed on April 9.

Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam said she was certain that an agreement between all parties would be found by Thursday.

"What I am sure about is that there will be a relevant piece of paper Thursday for the simple reason that the party leaders have shown the determination and courage to get there," she told Britain's GMTV television.

Saturday, the British and Irish Prime Ministers said they hoped that the two governments would finalise a joint document mapping out a compromise framework for the proposed peace deal by the end of the weekend.

This would allow talks chairman, former U.S. senator George Mitchell, to present a draft of the final accord to negotiators at Stormont, outside Belfast, Monday.

The parties, who remained in session over the weekend, would then continue to fine-tune this blueprint ready for

Thursday.

The goal is a deal to end a conflict which has claimed more than 3,200 lives since 1969, when sectarian fighting erupted between the Protestant majority and the large Catholic minority in the British province.

Britain sent in its troops, and in 1972 imposed direct rule on Ulster, which is divided between Protestant unionists who want to retain British rule and Catholic nationalists whose ultimate goal is a united Ireland.

Armed conflict between Catholic paramilitaries, led by the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and Protestant militias, has claimed hundreds of innocent lives, while British security forces have been repeatedly targeted by republican gunmen.

Since this round of multi-party talks began last September, the two governments, co-sponsors of the peace process, have prodded and cajoled the politicians on both sides to strike an historic compromise to end the 30 years of violence.

Mr. Blair and Mr. Ahern have held six meetings in the past week to iron out crucial differences.

Sunday, Gerry Adams, leader of the Sinn Fein political wing of the IRA, and John Hume, head of the moderate Catholic nationalist SDLP party, were to hold separate meetings with Irish Premier Bertie Ahern in Dublin.

Mr. Ahern also agreed to receive representatives

of the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), one of the two fringe Protestant parties with links to paramilitaries.

UDP leader Gary McMichael said he had requested the meeting to make clear to Mr. Ahern the limits of Protestant flexibility over the north-south issue.

Protestant leaders are fiercely opposed to any moves which would give Dublin an element of direct rule over Northern Ireland and are thus intent on limiting the scope of the north-south body demanded by the Catholics.

Under discussion are the powers the proposed north-south body would have, whether it would be set up by legislation in Dublin and London, and its relationship with a semi-autonomous Northern Ireland assembly — the other main plank of the governments' proposals.

Dublin is adamant that the cross-border structures must be meaningful. It is anxious to persuade the IRA, believed by security sources to be meeting this week to decide whether to extend their eight-month-old ceasefire, that the peace deal could form a stepping-stone on the road to a united Ireland.

If agreement is reached between the parties, the accord will be put to referendum in both Northern Ireland and Ireland on May 22.

Any major delay at these final crucial stages could throw the entire process off course.

Majority polled want Starr to drop Clinton probe

WASHINGTON (R) — A majority of Americans believe the perjury investigation of President Bill Clinton is unlikely to lead to charges against him and should be dropped, according to a Newsweek magazine poll issued Saturday.

A Washington Post poll, published in the newspaper's Sunday edition, also showed popular support for a time limit on independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's investigation, which most surveyed said was politically motivated.

With Mr. Clinton's approval rating still flying high, 57 per cent of those polled by Newsweek said Mr. Starr should end his investigation of allegations that the president had sex with Monica Lewinsky, lied about it under oath and induced the former White House intern to lie about it in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case.

Mr. Clinton has denied the allegations.

In the post poll, 34 per cent said Mr. Starr should wind up his probe now and 35 per cent said he should be given a time limit. Among respondents, 56 per cent saw the prosecutor's motive as political, while 32 per cent said Mr. Starr was working "to find the

truth."

Both polls were conducted after U.S. district court judge Susan Webber Wright dismissed the Jones civil suit that alleged Mr. Clinton made a crude advance to her while he was Arkansas governor in 1991.

An overwhelming 81 per cent of respondents in the Newsweek survey said it was unlikely that criminal charges or impeachment proceedings would be brought against Mr. Clinton while he was in the White House.

Even if there was strong evidence that Mr. Clinton lied under oath about an improper sexual relationship, 55 per cent would be satisfied with an apology from the president, or no punitive action at all, while 40 per cent said he should be removed from office, the Newsweek poll showed.

Mr. Clinton's approval rating was at 66 per cent in the Newsweek poll and 65 per cent in the Post survey.

But 70 per cent of the Newsweek respondents and 68 per cent of those polled by the Post said Mr. Clinton's presidency may be remembered more for allegations about his personal life than for his accomplishments in office.

Leipzig vote first election barometer in former East Germany

LEIPZIG, Germany (R) — Voters in Leipzig went to the polls Sunday to elect a new mayor in a vote which was being watched as an early test of the public mood in former East Germany ahead of September's general election.

Outgoing Mayor Hiltrich Lehmann-Grube, an opposition Social Democrat (SPD), has stood down early for health reasons and his party ally Wolfgang Tiefensee leads a pack of seven candidates running to succeed him.

Leipzig, an industrial city of half a million, is an SPD-led enclave in Saxony state, Saxony, which borders Poland and the Czech Republic, is the only state in the former East Germany which is ruled outright by Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU).

Pollsters say that the Sept. 27 general election could be won and lost in the east, over one in five workers in the region are out of a job and Mr. Kohl is struggling to live down a promise he made after unification of "blossoming landscapes."

NATO prepares to put finishing touches to new Bosnia force

BRUSSELS (AFP) — NATO is expected to put the finishing touches this week to its plans to keep a 30,000-strong peace-keeping force in Bosnia for an unlimited period.

The 16 members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) will begin talks Tuesday to discuss the arrangements for what will be the third NATO-led peace-keeping force in the Balkan republic since the end of 1995.

Wednesday, the NATO members will be joined by representatives of the additional countries that will provide troops for the force whose job it will be to police military compliance with Bosnia's Dayton peace accords.

The new force will retain the current Stabilisation Force (SFOR) name and remain under U.S. command in the interests of economics. However, following general elections this September, NATO hopes to reduce its contingents.

An official familiar with the planning said the two days would be spent sifting through all the offers of troops from each country and working out who will get which command posts.

As with the existing peace-keeping force, the new SFOR will be based around large forces from the United States, France, and Britain, which each control a third of the country, with other troops attached to their command.

However, U.S. forces will be reduced in size from 8,500 to 6,000 men, while the Ukrainian contingent will be boosted, the Malaysian force will shrink and 800 Belgian soldiers will be added.

U.S. intentions however to replace some of the soldiers with military police units has run into fierce opposition from France which had been lined up to command such a force.

The brainchild of NATO's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, U.S. General

Wesley Clarke, the idea is that with Bosnia's former warring armies safely in their barracks, the need for a fully fledged military force is reduced.

Instead, troops have increasingly found themselves caught up in incidents involving crowd control, a role more suited, the argument goes, to that of a military police force.

However, France and several other European states are worried about having fewer soldiers on the ground despite this

trend towards a more civilian role for the SFOR.


On the other hand Italy, whose Carabinieri military police will form the backbone of any NATO police force, has said it is ready to support the programme. Italian forces will be supplemented by Argentinean military police and maybe the Spanish.

Another development will be more diversity in SFOR command. At the suggestion of the Europeans, a major part of

the European Corps based in Strasbourg will be deployed in Bosnia.

There will also be a symbolic representation of the headquarters of the so-called Euroforce.

Made up of troops from Italy, France, Spain and Portugal, Euroforce was created in 1995 specifically for humanitarian missions and peacekeeping under the aegis of the Western European Union.



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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Light at end of tunnel

THE KIND of military operations that the Algerian authorities have been conducting lately against suspected militants accused of perpetrating the barbaric atrocities against innocent Algerians suggest that the government is finally serious about combating these crimes. In the last two weeks, the Algerian army and air force have killed about 200 militants in the west of the country, where most of the carnage has taken place. While these military operations may not soon succeed in decimating the extremists who have waged the war of terror against the people of Algeria, they nevertheless signal resolve by that government, which has promised to end the tide of terror.

Why did it, however, take the government so long to commission the necessary military action against bandits who stole innocent lives for the past three or four years? The silence of the government until now and the lack of effective measures taken to protect the people have led to all sorts of speculation. The government was put in an uncomfortable position when it came under pressure to allow an international investigation.

But at last the government is spearheading a military campaign to root out the reign of terror which has afflicted the country for much too long. What is now needed is the apprehension of some members of these groups who have terrorised the country in order to put them on public trials. The full truth about these criminals, whoever they are, cannot be disclosed until there are open trials, during which Algerians and non-Algerians alike can begin to comprehend the strange things that have been occurring in their midst for such a long time. Meanwhile, a reconciliation process should start in earnest. The government, political parties, the opposition and Islamists need to start probing, assessing and evaluating the calamities of the past eight years in order to put the country back on the track of peace, democracy and development. A great deal of destruction has befallen the country in this past decade and so many opportunities have been missed. It is now high time to restore Algeria's past dream.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek called on the Arab countries to acquire nuclear weapons to ensure their security against any Israeli aggression and to deter Israel from threatening the Arab nation's interests. It is no secret that Israel possesses 200 nuclear bombs and long-range missiles that can hit any Arab capital thanks to U.S. support of the Jewish state, Dr. Fanek said. He said since the Arabs are in no position to form a united front to confront Israel and secure the liberation of their occupied territories then at least they can acquire nuclear weapons with which to deter Israel from committing further aggression on them and so guarantee security for the Arab Nation. We have to remember that it was the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons that prevented the U.S. from launching a war on the Soviet block throughout the decades-long cold war, he said. He added that if the Arabs acquire nuclear weapons they will most probably not use them but at least these weapons can serve as a deterrent to Israel. The other alternative that can secure peace, according to Dr. Fanek, is the creation of a nuclear free zone in the Middle East with neither side possessing these weapons of mass destruction.

Al Dustour's Oreib Rintawi said Sunday that Jordan needs a modern election law to take it into the 21st century with all public sectors represented in Parliament and with political pluralism functioning in the interest of the nation. Now that the government has submitted a draft election law to Parliament, the door should be open wide for a nationwide dialogue and debate about the best and most suitable law for the public, he said. Saying the absence of women from Parliament was an injustice, the writer said it was shameful indeed not to see women candidates winning seats in the Lower House and it is most unacceptable to hear the government rejecting the idea of a women's quota in Parliament. The writer asked, if the society's traditions do not help women to be elected how can women's participation take place. It is good for the image of Jordan internally and externally to exclude women from democratic representation, he also asked. Rintawi said the new law should also take into consideration fair representation of Jordanians of Palestinian origin if the democratic process is to proceed in the right direction.

Economic Review

Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Choosing not to privatise

EVEN THOUGH privatisation was considered a possible policy choice in 1985 — long before the economic crisis of 1988 and the devaluation of the dinar — many still ponder the soundness of this strategy.

But the debate should shift to the upshot of non-privatisation. What consequences would emerge with the alternative, the non-privatisation choice? If we do not privatise, and still opt to upgrade the quality of our public services, we must borrow \$500 million to finance the face-lift and expansion of the Jordan Telecommunications Co. We should, also, borrow another \$500 million to finance the proposed electric power generation station to satisfy the expected demand at the turn of the century. And, we must borrow another \$650 million for water networks. (Note that Royal Jordanian, the national air carrier, is kept outside this portfolio argument because it would be almost impossible to sell a portion of it without bearing its huge debt of \$700 million.) In other words, the public debt should increase immediately by \$1.6 billion; thus the debt would rise to more than \$8 billion.

As a result of this non-privatisation choice, the debt burden per Jordanian participating in the labour force would rise by \$1,600. Additionally, the debt service burden per worker would increase by \$0.52 per day. This is not a small

fee, particularly when viewed relative to domestic income and spending and saving patterns. In fact, this is equivalent to a national disaster that will benefit no one.

Under this scenario the debate over what to do with the Generations Fund (revenues derived from privatisation) would subside or simply become moot because what the generations will inherit will be the "Generations Debt." Debt would replace revenues and the debt burden would be shifted from this generation, which would be unable to pay it, to the next generation.

As far as profitability is concerned these establishments would see a repeat of 1970-80 when Jordanian debt increased by 370% to 201% of GNP or 190% of GDP. Coincidentally, the profitability of these establishments averaged under 2% — a rate that was much lower than the cost of debt paid by the government to finance these schemes.

Nothing prevents history from harmonising with the past. If not to repeat itself. One need not be concerned over the choice of a strategic investor. As the decision to sell Jordanian shares is stalled further, in fear of one proviso or another, buyers will have gone elsewhere and approached other countries for stocks that are just as lucrative as ours, if not more so due to market size. Meanwhile, Jordan would

have lost one opportunity after another to reach efficient agreements with foreign investors to purchase technology at an affordable and sustainable price.

Foreign direct investment would not come to Jordan, it would seek other countries like Egypt, which received US\$ 740 million in foreign direct investment in 1996 because of its aggressive and serious privatisation drive.

One must always remember that nations are competing for foreign investment; it does not come knocking on anybody's door a second time. Another direct result of the no-sell scenario is the growth of government beyond any imaginable threshold and a blow to the private sector.

At stake, is the loss of privatisation as a tool for creating less government (destroying nepotism and waste or "whom you know"); and more private sector in larger markets instead of a small, weak monopolistic private sector that thrives on little or no competition. This generation may be free to choose; however, it is not free to make the wrong choice. Future generations may not be as forgiving toward this generation as it was of previous ones. Privatisation should be the immediate choice. Let us not wait too long.

M. KAHIL



Beware the invaders from Mars

By Gwynne Dyer

IT IS exactly one hundred years since the Martians destroyed the street I live in.

It's still there, of course, because they only did it in H.G. Wells' great novel 'The War of the Worlds.' He was the first writer ever to imagine an invasion from space, and his story is the prototype for almost all the others that have followed, down to 'Independence Day' and 'Mars Attacks' in the past few years. It is also the best, because it is not just a tale but also an allegory.

The reason my part of London got hit so hard was that Wells was actually living in Camden Town when he wrote the book, having left his wife and moved into Mornington Terrace with one of his students. So he put the Martians' last and biggest fortress right on top of Primrose Hill, overlooking his house and mine, in that deliberate mingling of the domestic and the unthinkable that gave the book such power when it burst upon the complacent world of Victorian Britain in 1898.

It's hard to imagine now just how smug and confident that world was. Britain was the world's greatest and richest power, ruling over a quarter of the planet's people, and London was the world's industry city. Science and industry were unalloyed forces for good, and 'Progress' was usually written with a capital letter.

It was the best of all possible worlds — unless, of course, you lived in the four-fifths of the world that was ruled by inscrutable foreigners with unstoppable

killing machines. And that was Wells' secret agenda: at the height and the heart of the British empire, he was a devout anti-imperialist.

At one level, 'The War of the Worlds' is just a techno-horror story. The invading Martians, who are as alien and repulsive as Wells could make them, have death-dealing heat-rays, poison-gas projectors, aircraft, and huge metal fighting machines that were unheard of in the late 19th century (though they are familiar enough now). British military resistance crumbles on the first day.

But at another level, the story is a harshly moral tale, in which the tidy houses and orderly lives of the ordinary people of England are torn apart and smashed by huge and horrible forces that pay no respect whatever to their humanity. They are simply vermin to be eliminated — or ultimately, as it turns out, cattle to be reared and consumed by the Martians.

It was this ruthless negation of the whole elaborate structure of British self-importance that made the novel so shocking, and such an instant best-seller, with Wells' original Victorian audience. No, he said, you are not exceptions; terrible things can happen to you, too. And he rubbed the point in with loving detail in describing the destruction of various districts round London, well-known streets, even individual houses and shops.

It was meant to frighten, and it did — particularly because the late Victorians, unlike ourselves, could not be sure that such a calamity would always remain a fiction. They knew just enough about the universe

to realise that life was theoretically possible on other planets, and not enough to know that Mars was a very unlikely candidate.

But Wells' purpose in writing the book was not just to frighten the British public. It was to give them a taste of how it feels to be the losers, overwhelmed and destroyed by pitiless forces so powerful and alien that you scarcely understand them. The way the Tasmanians must have felt, for example.

Wells gives the game away early in the book: "Before we judge (the Martians) too harshly, we must remember the ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought... upon its inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit?"

The Tasmanian aborigines must have been as astounded by the arrival of British settlers and their horses and guns in 1830 as Wells' British were by the Martians. But they didn't stay astounded long: by 1879, not a single one was left alive. And Michael Foot, Wells' biographer, suggests that it was hearing the story of the Tasmanians from his brother Frank that first put Wells in mind to write a story in which the British, and the whole "civilised" world, falls victim to an equally terrible fate.

Except that it doesn't. Wells had to make a living from his writing, so in the

end he lets the human race off the hook: the Martian invaders all die, not from anything the British have done, but from the earthly microbes against which their immune systems offer no defence. It's not exactly a happy ending — millions are dead, and London is wrecked — but it isn't the end of the world.

That much is common to every retelling of the story for the past hundred years: the aliens never win. They may be clever enough to cross the vast emptiness of space to get here, but once here they are no match for good old British/American/Japanese ingenuity.

In the most embarrassing knock-offs, like 'Independence Day', the invasion from space just becomes another excuse to wave the American flag. Even Orson Wells' famous radio adaptation of the original novel in 1938, relocated to New Jersey, settled for mere terror (thousands fled their homes while the programme was on the air) and avoided allegory.

But Herbert George Wells was a more serious man. He only wrote two more novels after 'War of the Worlds', and then turned to educating mankind more directly with his massive, best-selling 'Outline of History.' He died in 1946, one year after the Hiroshima bomb, of which he observed: "Reality has taken a leaf from my book and set itself to supercede me."

By which time everybody had already forgotten that the British in his book were actually 'natives.' And the Martians? They were the British.

Human Rights File

Jordanian-Israeli treaty:

The best gift to the Palestinian people

By Dr. W.M. Sadi

SINCE THE demographic factor constitutes the one trump card the Palestinian side holds in its negotiating strategy with Israel, the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty becomes the most effective guarantee that this card will never be neutralised by Israel — not in the short nor long term. On the basis of the latest census conducted by the Palestinian side, there are some 2.8 million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip including, of course, some 200,000 Palestinians who continue to make East Jerusalem their homeland. If we add to these figures the 1 million Arab Israelis living in the Galilee, we then have some 4 million Arabs living on the soils of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This population is projected to expand at the rate of 3.8 per cent per annum. Simple arithmetic shows that in ten years the Palestinian population in the Palestinian territories alone would increase by another one million. Unless of course the Palestinians are "driven" away by direct or indirect ways.

This is where the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty assumes critical dimension and constitutes the principal insurance policy that was magnanimously delivered by Jordan to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to frustrate any Israeli plan to expel the Palestinian people by force or otherwise. In fact, in deference to the letter and spirit of the treaty, Israel is not supposed to resort to even indirect means including economic measures to encourage the outflow of Palestinians to Jordan.

This gift from Jordan to the Palestinian side stands to be better recognised and appreciated in the years to come. Even wooing hardline Israeli Minister of Infrastructure Ariel Sharon appears to be in the long term interest of not only Jordan but also the Palestinians who must continue to base their bargaining stance on the increasing volume of the demographic dimension. The sooner the circle of peace treaties is completed the greater would be the protection accorded to the Palestinians against forcible expulsions from their homeland.

As long as the Palestinian people can be persuaded to stay put on their soil, Israel will be forced to reckon and deal with them as equal partners and give them the option of either establishing their own state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip or be integrated into Israel in which case there can be no escape from creating a binational state where Israel and the PNA are now situated.

To be sure, there are forces within the Israeli establishment the likes of Sharon who are busy contemplating all sorts of ways to Judaize not only the Galilee but also the Negev by applying restrictions on the acquisition of real estate by the Arab population. Still there are limits to how far and how much these elements can go in their determined effort to treat Arab Israelis as second class citizens. Israel happens to be a state party to several international human rights treaties which are legally binding on the country. This fact is most fortunate to the Arab Israelis as well as the Palestinian people residing in the Palestinian areas. Under these human rights instruments, Israel may not pursue any discriminatory legislation or practices against the Arab population or the Palestinian people. Once the Arab population and the Palestinians become increasingly aware of their civil, political, economic and cultural rights, there is no way Sharon and like-minded Israelis can persevere and succeed in their attempts to root out Arab Israelis from centres of political and economic power.

Most of the current discriminatory practices and laws in Israel will be struck down sooner or later under the pressure of these legally binding human rights conventions. Israeli courts will have to deal with these human rights issues head on sooner than later and any attempt to bury their heads in the sand by bypassing legally binding international norms is certain to backfire. There will come a day when Arab Israelis will enjoy the same rights as the Jewish Israelis be they political or economic. What Israel is now doing is swimming against the strong currents of civil rights movements. The ultimate solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies squarely in binding international human rights. As sure as the night follows the day, Israelis and Palestinians will sooner than later live side-by-side peacefully and productively in light of human rights that offer the one and only framework for the elusive final settlement for their disputes.

LETTERS

Don't look the other way

To the editor:

CONGRATULATIONS TO Jordan Times staff reporter Rana Hussein for her courage and conscience in exposing the problem of honour crimes in Jordan.

The government should reevaluate the penalties (or lack thereof) involved in such repulsive crimes, and sentence the barbarian perpetrators to immediate death, just as they have sentenced their deceased victims. When a male, by virtue of his gender alone, can get away with such a heinous act and make himself jury, judge and executioner under the pretext of "preserving family honour," what honour is this? Is it honourable to have a killer in the family? And if a male is suspected of committing an immoral act, is he scrutinised, frowned upon, or held accountable in any serious way? Does he have to fear for his life? Of course not. He would probably just blame a woman for "seducing him," and here we go again.

As long as Jordanian citizens look the other way each time these heinous acts are committed, it seems to me that maybe the ancient tradition of burying infant females in the sand might not be such a bad idea.

Someone must speak out for these souls who never had the chance to speak for themselves, and take real action. Since men seem to be the only gender respected in this country, it should obviously be a man who takes the leading role with regard to this problem.

I challenge the Jordanian government to rise up to this repugnant practice and act with the integrity that I trust is within the hearts of the Jordanian citizens.

Cynthia Johnson Qardan
 Amman

Features

New wave of U.S. immigrants tests a national tenet

By William Booth

WASHINGTON — At the beginning of this century, as steamers poured into American ports, their steerages filled with European immigrants, a Jew from England named Israel Zangwill penned a play whose story line has long been forgotten but whose central theme has not. His production was entitled "The Melting Pot," and its message still holds a tremendous power on the national imagination: the promise that all immigrants can be transformed into Americans, a new alloy forged in a crucible of democracy, freedom and civic responsibility.

In 1908, when the play opened in Washington, the United States was in the middle of absorbing the largest influx of immigrants in its history — Irish and Germans, followed by Italians and East Europeans, Roman Catholics and Jews — some 18 million new citizens between 1890 and 1920.

Today the United States is experiencing its second great wave of immigration, a movement of people that has profound implications for a society that by tradition pays homage to its immigrant roots at the same time it confronts complex and deeply ingrained ethnic and racial divisions.

The immigrants of today come not from Europe but overwhelmingly from the still-developing world of Asia and Latin America. They are driving a demographic shift so rapid that within the lifetimes of today's teenagers, no one ethnic group — including whites of European descent — will comprise a majority of the population.

This shift, according to social historians, demographers and others studying the trends, will severely test the premise of the fabled melting pot — the idea, so central to national identity, that the United States can transform people of every colour and background into "one America." Just as possible, they say, the nation may fracture into many separate, disconnected communities with no shared sense of commonality or purpose. Or it may evolve into something in between, a pluralistic society that will hold on to some core ideas about citizenship and capitalism but with little meaningful interaction among groups.

The demographic changes raise other questions about political and economic power. Will that power, now held disproportionately by whites, be shared in the new America? What will happen when Hispanics overtake blacks as the nation's single largest minority?

"I do not think that most Americans really understand the historic changes happening before their very eyes," said Peter Salins, an immigrant scholar who is provost of the State Universities of New York. "What are we going to become? Who are we? How do the newcomers fit in? And how do the natives handle it? This is the great unknown."

Fear of strangers of course, is nothing new in American history. The last great immigration wave produced a bitter backlash, epitomised by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the return, in the 1920s, of the Ku Klux Klan, which targeted not only blacks but immigrants as well.

Despite this strife, many historians argue that there was a greater consensus in the past on what it meant to be an American, a yearning for a common language and culture, and a desire — encouraged if not coerced by members of the dominant white Protestant culture — to assimilate.

Today, they say, there is more emphasis on preserving one's ethnic identity, of finding ways to highlight and define one's cultural roots.

More often than not, the

neighbourhoods where Americans live, the politicians and propositions they vote for, the cultures they immerse themselves in, the friends and spouses they have, the churches and schools they attend and the way they view themselves are defined by ethnicity. The question is whether, in the midst of such change, there is also enough glue to hold Americans together.

"As we become more and

"... you witness this persistence of segregation, the fragmentation, all these fights over resources, this finger-pointing. You would have to be blind not to see it."

more diverse, there is all this potential to make that reality work for us," said Angela Oh, a Korean-American activist who emerged as a powerful voice for Asian immigrants after the Los Angeles riots in 1992. "But yet you witness this persistence of segregation, the fragmentation, all these fights over resources, this finger-pointing. You would have to be blind not to see it."

It is a phenomenon sometimes difficult to measure but easy to observe. In high school cafeterias, the second- and third-generation children of immigrants clump together in cliques defined by where their parents or grandparents were born. At the law school of the University of California at Los Angeles, which has about 1,000 students, there are separate student associations for blacks, Latinos and Asians, each with its own law review journal.

It almost goes without saying that the new arrivals are a source of vitality and energy, especially in the big cities to which many are attracted. Diversity, almost everyone agrees, is good, choice is good and exposure to different cultures and ideals is good.

But many scholars worry about the loss of community and shared sense of reality among Americans — what Todd Gitlin, professor of culture and communications at New York University, calls "the twilight of common dreams."

The concern is echoed by many on both the left and right, and of all ethnicities, but no one seems to know exactly what to do about it.

Researchers already speak of a new "demographic Balkanisation," not only of residential segregation, forced or chosen, but also a preference to see ourselves through a racial prism.

The demographic shifts are smudging the old lines demarcating the historical and often distinct societies of black and white.

Whites account for 74 per cent of the population, blacks 12 per cent, Hispanics 10 per cent and Asians 3 per cent. According to data and predictions generated by the Census Bureau and social scientists, Hispanics will likely surpass blacks early in the next century. By 2050, demographers say Hispanics will account for 25 per cent of the population, blacks 14 per cent and Asians 8 per cent, with whites around 53 per cent.

As early as next year, whites no longer will be the majority in California; in Hawaii and New Mexico this is already the case. Soon after, Nevada, Texas, Maryland and New Jersey are likely to become "majority minority" states, entities where no one ethnic group is the majority.

The overwhelming majority of immigrants come from Asia and Latin Ameri-

ca — Mexico, the Central American countries, the Philippines, Korea and Southeast Asia.

Congress triggered this transformation in 1965 when it made family reunification the primary criteria for admittance under immigration law. That policy, a response to charges that the law favoured white Europeans, allowed immigrants already in the country to bring over relatives, who in turn could bring over more relatives.

As a result, the country has been absorbing as many as one million newcomers a year, to the point that almost 1 in 10 residents is foreign-born.

The intake, relative to the overall population, was slightly higher at the beginning of the century, but the current immigration wave is in many ways very different, and its context inexorably altered, from the last great wave.

This time around tensions are sharpened by the changing profile of those who are entering the nation. Not only are their racial and ethnic backgrounds more varied but their place in a modern postindustrial economy has also been recast.

The newly arrived can be roughly divided into those with college degrees and highly specialised skills and those with almost no education or job training. Some 12 per cent of immigrants have graduate degrees, compared with 8 per cent of native Americans. But more than one-third of the immigrants have no high school diploma, double the rate for those born in the United States.

About 6 per cent of new arrivals receive some form of welfare, double the rate for U.S.-born citizens.

With large numbers of immigrants arriving from Latin America and segregating in barrios, there is also evidence of lingering language problems. In Miami, three-quarters of residents speak a language other than English at home and 67 per cent of those say they are not fluent in English. In New York City, 4 of every 10 residents speak a language other than English at home and of these, half say they do not speak English well.

It is clear that not all of America is experiencing the impact of immigration equally. Although even small Midwestern cities have seen sharp changes in their racial and ethnic mix in the past two decades, most immigrants continue to cluster into a handful of large, mostly coastal metropolitan areas: Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Miami, Washington and Houston. They are home to more than a quarter of the total U.S. population and more than 60 per cent of all foreign-born residents.

But as the immigrants arrive, many U.S.-born citizens pour out of these cities to more homogeneous locales. New York and Los Angeles each lost more than 1 million native-born residents between 1990 and 1995, even as their populations increased by roughly the same numbers with immigrants.

To oversimplify, said Will Frey, a University of Michigan demographer, "For every Mexican who comes to Los Angeles, a white native-born leaves."

Most of the people leaving the big cities are white, and they tend to be working class. This is a new kind of "white flight," whereby whites are not just fleeing the city centres for the suburbs but also leaving the region and often the state.

"The Ozies and Harriets of the 1990s are skipping the suburbs of the big cities and moving to more homogeneous, mostly white smaller towns and smaller cities and rural areas," Mr. Frey said.

— Washington Post

Arab Americans, beleaguered but fighting back

By Andrea Shalal-Esa
Reuters

WASHINGTON — The latest crisis with Iraq and rising hate crimes and other discrimination directed against Arab Americans are helping unite the diverse and often fragmented U.S. ethnic minority community.

Throughout the United States, the recent standoff with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, which once again brought the United States to the brink of military action, has proven a rallying point for Americans of Arab origin.

"The latest crisis was a really important episode where Arab Americans were fairly vocal, along with peace groups, church groups and other groups opposed to bombing," said Sam Hussein of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.

There are an estimated three to five million Arab Americans including prominent entertainers, business and government leaders such as actress Marlo Thomas, Health Secretary Donna Shalala and Ray Irani, chairman of Occidental Petroleum Corp.

But there is no separate U.S. census category for Arab Americans and they are classified as "white" or "other," which means the FBI does not catalogue hate crimes committed against them and it underreports hate crimes committed against Muslims, who are listed as a separate category.

For instance, in 1995 the Council on American Islamic Relations reported more than 200 anti-Muslim hate crimes, but the FBI registered only 29 incidents, ADC said.

New technologies help unite disparate community

New technologies are helping unify the voices of Arab Americans, linking individuals in towns and cities across the United States to create a larger, more powerful community. Using e-mail and Internet web sites, groups like ADC helped rally opposition to U.S. military strikes against Iraq.

"They were getting action alerts from us in a timely manner, and that meant they didn't feel so isolated," ADC's Hussein said. "Seeing press releases, action alerts online gives them a sense of connectedness."

Khalil Jahshan, president of the National Association of Arab Americans, says the Internet has helped his group reach out to a new generation of potential activists as well as spreading the word far beyond its traditional constituency.

He said 80 per cent of new members are students — constituents reached mainly by e-mail or the Internet. He also noted that there had been a dramatic increase in the availability of U.S. Arab media outlets, with radio and television programmes beamed to

people around the country.

Hikmat Beaini, who came to the United States from Lebanon in the 1980s, established Al Nashra, a nationwide Arab American newspaper, in 1991, and has published a nationwide directory of Arab American businesses and organisations since 1994.

He also hosts a weekly radio show on ANA Arabic radio linking employers with prospective employees on the air. Such broadcasts, he said, are "playing a great role in making Arab Americans feel like a community."

"Arabs are dehumanised" in media portrayals scholars such as Georgetown University Professor John Esposito have written of the increasing demonisation of Islam in the United States since the end of the cold war and the loss of worldwide communism as a common enemy.

Underscoring the trend has been a rash of negative portrayals of Arabs in the media, prompting boycotts and protests against media conglomerates such as Disney, whose film "Aladdin" drew a lot of heat from the Arab community.

"Arabs are dehumanised, they are seen as

... in 1995 the Council on American Islamic Relations reported more than 200 anti-Muslim hate crimes, but the FBI registered only 29 incidents — ADC

violent irrational terrorists always on the lookout for murder and bombing outrages," wrote Columbia University Professor Edward Said in an essay published in Al Hayat magazine in December.

As if to underscore the point, an Islamic star and crescent — placed alongside the national Christmas tree and a national Hanukkah menorah on the capital mall for the first time in 1997 — were desecrated with a swastika and had to be replaced.

President Bill Clinton condemned the vandalism as "the embodiment of intolerance that strikes at the heart of what it means to be an American." For many Arab Americans, it was a grim reminder, in the words of ADC President Hala Maksoud, "that there are still people who cannot reconcile themselves to the fact that Muslims are part of the great American mosaic."

In fact, there are many more Muslims in America than Arabs, and many Arab Americans are Christian or profess other faiths.

But being Muslim and being Arab are often portrayed in the media as synonymous, and Arab Americans tend to experience a surge in hate crimes and discrimination after events like the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and 1996 crash of TWA Flight 800.

"People are so narrow," says Arab American anti-Islamic sentiment also flared when a few citizens in Virginia's Loudoun County near Washington tried unsuccessfully to block construction of a \$50 million Saudi-sponsored Islamic school by suggesting it could draw in Muslim extremists.

Ghida Askari, a American citizen who was born in Iraq, works in Loudoun County and said she was appalled by the nasty tone of the debate about the school. "It upset me for a while, and then I just stopped reading because I realised that these people are so narrow," she said.

Askari, who has two children aged 11 and 15, says she is troubled by the demonisation in the U.S. media of the Iraqi people and the lack of differentiation between the brutal regime of President Saddam Hussein and his people.

The trouble with the U.S. media, she said, is that "everything has to be seen in terms of black and white — not in terms of gray, which reality usually is. Everything has to be taken to its common denominator and simplified to such an extent that the truth is no longer there."

But across the country Arab Americans are organising and fighting back against what Columbus, Ohio, activist Andy Amid calls media accounts that are "almost devoid of any balance."

Amid, an American with Arab ancestry, takes issue with negative portrayals of Arabs in the media, saying, "Arabs — they're almost all bad guys. You see this day after day and it's very insidious. People have come to believe it."

Yet he is finding that once he and other activists point out distortions and problems to local media organisations, they generally work harder at avoiding biased reporting.

James Zogby, president of the Arab-American Institute, says Arab Americans have come a long way in the past two decades.

There are now some 200 Arab American professional and political organisations around the country, and politicians are starting to take note. Zogby and others were invited to participate in a recent White House conference on racism, and they regularly meet with high-ranking government officials.

"We now exist as a political factor. And that wasn't the case before," Zogby told Reuters in an interview. "There's a tendency to view the glass as half empty or half full but there was a point not that long ago where we didn't have a glass."

Chicago loft holds cache of Arabian culture

By Jon Anderson

CHICAGO — In a land of old warehouses, hamburger stands and coffee shops south of the Loop, there rests, temporarily, one of the world's best collections of the "material culture" of the Arabian Peninsula.

That, translated from museum talk, means everyday stuff, the home inventory of a people on the move, facing demanding realities of life in the vast deserts of the Arabian interior, a place of blinding winds, sandstorms, blazing summer days and frosty winter nights.

Stored in Chicago by a daughter of the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, the cache includes 10,000 items, most of it neatly packed in metal cabinets — tents, rugs, camel gear, robes, veils, jewelry, weapons, pots, baskets, books, rare maps and "desert toothpicks," a straight twig sharpened to provide a rudimentary form of daily flossing.

"Basically, there is no other collection on this scale in the world," said Virginia Heaven, a former staffer at the Chicago Historical Society, now curator of the Haifa Faisal Collection of Saudi Arabian Traditional Arts.

Other experts agree with the assessment. "This is a very valuable resource," noted John Woods, a University of Chicago history professor with an interest in the Middle East. "Increasingly, people are going to study these things, to understand ways of life that are passing out of existence," he said in a phone interview. "Their having the foresight to pull this together is very important."

It has become, in a small circle of people who track the city's hidden treasures, something of a hot ticket, even though it is closed to the public without special invitation. Think of it, Woods suggested, as the raw material for an Arabian version of Greenfield Village, Henry Ford's tribute to old American ways, set on 81 acres near Detroit. Only this collection is on the sixth floor of 1255 S. Wabash Ave., on a block so unprepossessing that StreetWise, a newspaper of homeless people, just moved away into better quarters.

How all of this got to Chicago — the Saudi ruling family's national collection in a South Loop loft — is a story with considerable twists and turns. It started with a party, or rather "a cultural evening," in 1986 at the Saudi Arabian embassy in Washington.

Heaven told the story over coffee and cookies laid out on a round brass table that looked

as if, when rubbed the right way, it would have many tales to tell.

"Princess Haifa Bint Faisal, who is the wife of Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the U.S., Prince Bandar Bin Sultan, was asked to help organise the evening," Heaven began.

Looking for artifacts that would illustrate life on the Arabian Peninsula, particularly the ways of the nomadic Bedouin, the princess quickly came to a rather depressing conclusion.

Much of the best material had been carted off by Western collectors, many of them linked to the oil and construction companies that have been working in Saudi Arabia since the 1940s.

Looking for help in organising the evening, the princess called Elizabeth Jachimowicz, a national figure in the field of material collection and presentation, then on the staff of the Chicago Historical Society.

"I can't do it," Jachimowicz replied, "but my assistant can."

That was Heaven. She went to Washington and helped pull off the evening. Then she was hired to bring about some sort of solution to the problem of the artifacts' scarcity.

Her mission was to pull together a collection, under Saudi control, of "beautiful and superbly crafted artifacts," as the Princess called them.

In a time when old ways of life were changing under pressure from industrialisation, the idea was to save some of the country's rich cultural heritage before it was scattered, like blown grains of sand, to the corners of the Earth.

"First, we wanted to save things. Later, we plan to figure out what to do with them," she said. A big first step came about by chance, when two major private collections of Arabian materials were "put into play," as they say in the world of business.

One consisted of the holdings, notably dresses and jewellery, of Heather Colyer Ross, author of the two-volume "Art of Arabian Costume." Born in Australia, now living in Switzerland, Colyer Ross spent considerable time in Riyadh, recording the careful attention Arab women paid to their appearance, wearing colourful costumes even in remote regions where comforts were few.

The other collection belonged to John Topham, a former construction company executive now living in upstate New York. Author of "Traditional Crafts of Saudi Arabia,"

Topham's interests touched on almost everything else in traditional Saudi Arabian life — from weaving to leatherwork, basketry, woodwork, pottery and metalwork.

By 1991, members of the Saudi Arabian royal family had completed negotiations to buy both collections.

"They needed to put them somewhere. I said I was willing to do the work of conserving and cataloging, but I wanted to stay in Chicago," Heaven said.

So seven years ago, 40 giant crates were quietly hauled into a loft, a few blocks west of Lake Michigan, along with conservation equipment, including a tent and a freezer, both useful in dealing with another problem of the desert — bugs.

"We probably have the most bug-free environment in the South Loop," said Heaven, noting that incoming materials are vacuumed, then frozen, destroying the eggs of moths, weevils and beetles.

A staff of 13 now helps with storing, conserving, photographing and cataloging. There is no shortage of work.

Down one aisle, a visitor noted on a grand tour, are metal lockers filled with bridal gowns, hung in dry-cleaner covers. Under a dust sheet is a closed wooden carriage that fits over a camel's hump, which gives a ride like a slowly-swerving taxicab.

Shelves hold incense burners to perfume a home with sandalwood and frankincense. Elsewhere are dozens of brass coffee pots and spouted bowls, used to feed children, milk camels and measure liquids.

"In the Bedouin lifestyle, everything served more than one purpose," Heaven said.

What will happen to the Haifa Faisal Collection? A decision is expected in two years. Regardless of the decision, it won't stay in Chicago.

It might not even be in a building. At this point, she is unsure what form to take, particularly if the collection returns to Riyadh.

Perhaps, she suggested, the collection might settle in Washington, as an ongoing Saudi Arabian cultural exhibition. Or, in these electronic times, it might make more sense to construct an on-line museum.

While it waits, the Haifa Faisal Collection has, however, developed a little local reputation of its own.

— Chicago Tribune

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Imports from Syria cause hardships for Jordanian clothing manufacturers

**** MORE THAN** twenty owners of textile and clothing workshops have written to government officials describing their bad work conditions and their inability to continue operations nothing that they are unable to pay taxes and telephone as well as electricity bills.

The main reason for their problems is that a number of traders import fabrics, especially "bride costumes" from Syria and such a flow of goods has negatively affected the local product and forced more than five workshops to close down. Among the workshops that shut their doors are: Al Muhaseb, Tahseen Al Awari, Al Shurbaji, Abu Libbeh, Al Fursan, Abu Ahmad Al Masri, Bulbul Al Masri and his partner Al Sarfandi and Bukhari stores in Irbid. Each of the plans was providing income for no less than 10 families.

In their letters, the owners of the workshops stressed smuggling operations as being also a major problem. They complained that goods enter from Syria, Egypt and Taiwan and that some Syrian traders bring their goods across the border without paying customs. They charged that others manufacture clothes and bride costumes at homes and then sell their products (at low prices) which affects workshops that operate under licences and pay taxes.

The entrepreneurs said that more than 2,000 barber and hair-dressing saloons are engaged in the business of renting "bride costumes" without being subject to the criteria of the Amman Chamber of Commerce and without paying fees.

According to Aziz Robin, owner of Al Muhaseb workshop and fashion shop, the Jordanian market is flooded with imported goods, especially those coming from Syria. "Some merchants import foreign goods from China, Taiwan and Turkey and bring it to Syria where a label 'Made in Syria' is fixed on the goods." Then the goods are brought into Jordan without customs, he pointed out.

Mr. Aziz Robin indicated that many workshops and plants had to close because of the dumping of foreign goods on the market without customs being paid on them. "Our workshops can satisfy the needs of the country if the imports are stopped," he said noting that his plant can employ around 40 workers. "I can provide the market with 50 bride costumes and engagement dress. If given protection by minimising imports and banning barbers and hairdressers from renting the products (Al Arab Al Yawm).

Tabba'a: JCFC does not need a strategic partner

Egyptian firm selected as advisor for selling 33% of government equity in cement company

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Egypt Financing Group-Hermes was chosen to be the financial advisor for selling 33 per cent of the government's equity in the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCFC) to a strategic investor, a government source announced Sunday.

The source, who asked not to be named, said the Egyptian firm was selected from among 10 firms that submitted requests to work as the government's advisor in the privatisation process of the profitable JCFC.

The official told the Jordan Times that the decision was made following thorough "evaluation" of all proposals.

"The Egyptian firm was chosen for the experience it possessed in the privatisation of cement companies in Egypt and also for its market strategy and the experience in the Middle East," the official said.

He indicated that the Egyptian firm's proposal was "the best offer from all the bids that entered the contest."

The well-informed official explained that the financial advisor will help in selling 33 per cent of the government's 49 per cent equity in the JCFC to a strategic partner in line with the privatisation process stipulated in the restructuring programme.

The Egyptian firm, which is owned by the sons of the well-known Egyptian journalist Mohammad Hasanein competed against international companies like HSBC, ING Barings, Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley, Salomon Brothers and others.

In 1996, the EFG-Hermes led the selling of one million shares of Amira Cement Company in Egypt. The JCFC, which recorded JD11.9 million net profit in 1997, is among the major firms the government has decided to sell to foreign investors.

The company's assets increased in the past year by JD5.7 million to reach JD277.9 million.

But the government decision was a "surprise" to some parties which said the decision was not well-studied.

"We have not been informed officially about the government's decision," JCFC Chairman Hamdi Tabba'a said.

"The government bears the responsibility of this decision which was made without consultations with

the concerned party, namely, the JCFC," Mr. Tabba'a told the Jordan Times.

"Several well-known firms with good experience in this field have applied for this contest. I am surprised of the government's choice and do not feel comfortable with this decision," he said. "If it is a political decision, then its over to the cement industry in the country," Mr. Tabba'a, who also heads the Jordan Businessmen Association, said.

Mr. Tabba'a said the JCFC does not need a "strategic partner" adding that he had sent a letter to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali telling him that the government's decision to sell its equity to a strategic partner was "not necessary." He emphasised that several international firms which studied the JCFC's position

have submitted conditions which would put major power in their hands.

"Some of them wanted to have the right to veto JCFC's decision despite not having a large equity in the company. In one word they want to be 'superiors'," Mr. Tabba'a said.

"We have the experience and know-how to run the JCFC and we do not think that a strategic partner is needed," he added.

Another financial source, who asked not to be named, said that the government decision to select the EFG-Hermes as financial advisor was a "disaster."

"The government needs to explain why this decision was made and on what bases. What is the criteria that was followed in the process," the source said.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.8490	0.6030	1.5260	135.16	1.4215	1822.00	2.0825	6.1935	
DE Mark	0.5408	1.0000	0.3258	0.8253	73.10	0.7585	985.13	1.2522	3.3495
GB Sterling	1.6385	3.0674	1.0000	2.5309	224.24	2.3576	3021.79	3.4538	10.2719
CH Franc	0.6553	121.09	0.3945	1.0000	88.54	0.8309	1193.19	136.38	4.0660
JP Yen	0.0074	1.3571	0.4455	1.1283	1.0000	1.0610	13.47	183.97	4.5793
CA Dollar	0.7035	1.3048	0.4231	1.0794	1.05	1.2572	1.4706	4.3729	
IT Lira	0.0005	1.0143	0.3305	0.8837	1349.89	0.7798	11.42	3.3874	
NL Guilder	0.4802	88.77	0.2893	73.28	61.86	0.6824	874.70	2.9734	
FR Franc	0.1615	0.2384	0.0973	24.6308	24.80	0.2294	33.61	33.6100	

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7503	0.3770	3.6410	0.3084	3.6728	1628.00	3.3900
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	6.2896	0.5317	5.1264	0.4321	5.1803	2155.15	4.7814
Saudi Riyal	0.2686	0.1891	1.0000	0.1005	0.37	0.0817	0.38	407.43	0.9036
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9477	1.0000	9.66	0.8126	9.74	4053.05	8.9920
Qatar Dinar	0.2746	0.1947	1.0300	1.0300	1.0000	0.0841	1.01	419.66	0.9311
Kuwait Dinar	3.2641	2.3143	12.2415	1.2306	11.88	11.99	4987.60	0.9311	
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0205	0.9913	0.0834	1.01	416.03	0.9230
Lebanese L1000	0.65	0.4840	2.4544	0.2467	2.3829	0.2005	2.4037	2.2186	
Egyptian	0.2950	0.2091	1.1063	0.1112	1.0740	0.0904	1.0834	450.74	

Energy

Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	13.65	13.49
W. Texas	16.04	16.00
Bonny	13.65	13.49
Dubai	12.15	12.01
UL Gas	151.00	151.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2686	0.4832	0.16077	0.40717	36.0633
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.50368	0.16417	0.41577	36.8243
KW Dinar	3.2641	8.03865	1.96812	4.98504	441.501
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.90677	1.59923	4.05022	358.809
CY Pound	1.8516	3.4236	1.1158	2.8255	250.244

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	308	308.5
Silver (oz's)	6.6	6.85
Platinum (oz's)	412	414
AL (3 Months)	1413	1415
CU (3 Months)	1700	1705
Zinc (3 Months)	1119	1123
Lead (3 Months)	891	894
Ni (3 Months)	6370	6400

Libor Fixing

Period	-1	-3	-6	-12
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.8875	5.7578	5.7969	5.8828
GBP	7.6156	7.5833	7.5833	7.5938
JPY	0.7396	0.7917	0.7917	0.7917
DEM	3.6374	3.7375	3.8248	3.9625
FRF	3.5313	1.8719	1.7813	1.9219
CHF	1.5625	3.8133	3.7188	3.9063
ITL	5.6990	6.3630	5.0300	-

Main Equity Indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pt Cts
New York	DOW JONES	8983.41	-3.23	-0.04	9030.49	8946.29	8988.64
New York	S&P 500	1122.7	2.89	0.26	1126.36	1118.12	1120.01
London	FT-SE 100	6064.2	11.4	0.19	6105.3	6024.5	6052.8
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	15517.78	-185.12	-1.18	15855.3	15456.1	15702.9
Paris	CAC 40	3932.02	-3.86	-0.1	3987.82	3919.41	3935.88
Frankfurt	DAX	5223.62	46.86	0.91	5246.04	5203.58	5176.88

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/bs)	150.42	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1869	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	286.7	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	88	Spot
Soya (c/bs)	26.53	Spot
Tea (std/kg)	150	Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	400	Spot

* JOD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1733	1.1792
DE Mark	0.3825	0.3844
CH Franc	0.4633	0.4656
FR Franc	0.1142	0.1148
JP Yen	0.0241	0.0257
NL Guilder	0.3396	0.3413
IT Lira	0.3881	0.39

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Israel imports kosher coffee from Jordan

From the Jerusalem Post

THIS PESSAH consumers can enjoy mush-

rooms from China, fish from Tanzania and Kenya, olive oil from Spain, fruit salad from Thailand, and even instant coffee produced in Jordan.

The products are among the 165 listed in a special booklet of kosher for Pessah products approved by the

Chief Rabbinate, which is responsible for granting kashrut certificates on imported food, according to Rabbi Haim Silber, head of the kashrut division.

The coffee was approved as kosher for Pessah by department's adjudicator, Rabbi Dov Landau.

The coffee, called "Coffee Break," is produced by the United Coffee Company in Amman.

Silber noted that before the rabbinate would grant its approval, it sent a kashrut supervisor to Amman to inspect the production line.

The supervisor, Michael Hoffman said that the Jordanians were more understanding about kashrut requirements than food manufacturers in many other parts of the world. "They are Christians and Muslims and they are educated people. Their religion is closer to ours than many others in the Far East, for example," Hoffman said.

He said that he and his assistant remained in Amman for four days while the entire Pessah production took place.

"Basically it is a kosher plant for all year, but for Pessah there has to be constant supervision," he said.

The booklet, which is to be available at local rabbinate offices, includes both regular kosher for Pessah items and those which are mehadrin, for those with especially stringent observance requirements. It also includes non-food items, such as toothpaste from Poland, cosmetics from England and cleaning materials from Italy, Germany and Spain.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET									
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDANIAN									
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 05/04/1998									
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV. %	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
346,000	251,000	ARAB BANK	14.1	1.16	14	740	254870	340.00	346.00 +0.00
2,340	1,660	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	E	0.00	39	56100	97794	1.72	1.77 +0.05
S 3,540	1,250	BANK OF JORDAN	4.2	0.00	4	3500	4700	1.34	1.34 -
S 2,300	890	MID-EAST INV. BK.	65.7	0.00	1	250	250	0.95	1.00 +0.05
S 2,680	1,450	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	9.1	8.01	6	17000	29900	1.76	1.76 -
S 4,420	4,650	THE HOUSING BK.	17.4	2.82	47	35750	194577	5.40	5.50 +0.10
S 4,180	1,810	JOR. KUNAWAT BANK	1.8	0.00	4	327	590	1.82	1.81 -0.01
S 920	590	JOR. GULF	3.7	11.29	9	8650	3581	1.62	1.62 -
S 4,020	1,930	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	9.7	5.03	7	1916	3568	1.83	1.91 +0.02
S 1,450	1,020	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	P	0.00	2	10300	10506	1.03	1.02 -0.01
S 1,400	800	BRIT. AL-HOL (BETRA)	5	17.44	2	400	338	0.82	0.86 +0.04
S 4,990	2,500	ARAB BANKING CO.	21.9	0.00	1	200	558	2.94	2.79 -0.15
BANK SECTOR TOTALS									
2,400	1,990	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.9	11.85	5	3298	6722	2.02	2.11 +0.09
S 4,990	2,100	PHILADELPHIA INSUR.	10.6	0.06	3	7000	15050	2.20	2.20 -
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS									
INDEX: 241.72	FCMG: +1.65	136	132143	601270					
2,400	1,990	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.9	11.85	5	3298	6722	2.02	2.11 +0.09
S 4,990	2,100	PHILADELPHIA INSUR.	10.6	0.06	3	7000	15050	2.20	2.20 -
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS									
INDEX: 122.54	FCMG: +0.43	8	10298	21772					
2,140	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.2	4.72	21	96050	201806	2.22	2.12 -0.10
S 5,000	2,450	HIMER MINERALS	49.2	0.00	2	200	879	4.29	4.50 +0.21
S 1,550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	43.1	0.00	24	13900	14749	1.05	1.08 +0.03
S 9,500	6,700	ALKA 1	9.5	0.00	1	50	465	9.40	9.30 -0.10
S 1,480	1,120	JOR. EAST HOTELS	18.3	0.45	4	500	588	1.15	1.20 +0.05
S 1,090	900	ZARFA EDUCATION	16.9	0.00	2	1150	1104	0.95	0.96 +0.01
S 1,830	1,520	UNIFIED CO.	6.9	7.10	2	600	930	1.52	1.55 +0.03
S 810	600	UNION LAND DEV.	9	0.00	1	500	315	0.65	0.63 -0.02
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS									
INDEX: 118.73	FCMG: +0.16	58	112962	220862					

Zimbabwe
humble
Australia
in mighty
boilover

Doris Cup
World Group (Final Round)
USA 1 Russia 1
Sunday
Vegenty Kuznetsov (Rus) bt Boris Beizer (USA) 6-4, 6-4
Andre Agassi (USA) bt Marat Safin (Rus) 6-3, 6-2
Belgium 1 Netherlands 1
Friday (Dewailly) Boris Becker bt Sjeng Schalkma (Ned) 6-2, 7-5
Jan Siemerink (Ned) bt Arno Kux (Bel) 6-3, 4-6, 6-1
Brazil 2 Spain 1
Tuesday
Gustavo Kuerten (Braz) bt Oscar Parra (Span) 6-3, 6-2
Andre Agassi (USA) bt Fernando Meligeni (Ger) 6-4, 6-3, 6-2
Gustavo Kuerten (Braz) bt Carlos Moya (Esp) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4
Germany 3 South Africa 0
Wednesday
Boris Becker (Ger) bt Pietrangeli (Gey) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4
Nicola Pietrangeli (Gey) bt Thomas Haas (Ger) 6-3, 6-2
Thomas Haas (Ger) bt Wayne Ferreira (RSA) 6-2, 6-3, 6-2
Australia 2 Zimbabwe 1
Mark Woodford (Aust) bt Woodchuck (Zim) 6-3, 6-4, 6-2
Mark Woodford (Aust) bt Wayne Ferreira (RSA) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4
Wayne Ferreira (RSA) bt Patrick Rafter (Aust) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4
Slovakia 2 Sweden 1
Monday
Lars-Olof Larsson (Swe) bt Tibor Denek (Slovak) 6-3, 6-4
Tibor Denek (Slovak) bt Mikael Tillander (Slovak) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4
Mikael Tillander (Slovak) bt Magnus Norman (Slovak) 6-3, 6-2, 6-2
Switzerland 2 Czech Republic 1
Tuesday
Roger Federer (Swt) bt Daniel Vacek (Cze) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4
Daniel Vacek (Cze) bt Daniel Vacek (Swt) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4
Daniel Vacek (Cze) bt Luc Hembach (Swt) 6-3, 6-2, 6-2
Italy 2 India 1
Saturday
Rajeev Bhargava (Ind) bt Davide Sargu (Ita) 6-3, 6-4
Davide Sargu (Ita) bt Sargu (Ind) 6-3, 6-2
Sargu (Ind) bt Prashad Sargu (Ita) 6-3, 6-2
African Zone Group 1, 2nd rd
Britain 3 Ukraine 0
Greg Rusedski and Tim Henman (GBR) bt Andrei Medvedev (UKR) 6-3, 7-6 (11/9)
Greg Rusedski (GBR) bt Andrei Rybakov (UKR) 6-4, 6-0, 6-4
Tim Henman (GBR) bt Andrei Medvedev (UKR) 6-2, 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 1-6, 6-1
Romania 3 Norway 0
Andrei Pavel (Romania) bt Romy (Nor) 6-3, 6-2, 6-2
Romy (Nor) bt Jan Frodin (Nor) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4
Andrei Pavel (Romania) bt Christian Breda (Nor) 6-2, 6-2, 6-2
Finland 0 France 3
Guillaume Raoux (France) bt Nicolas Pietrangeli (Fin) 7-5, 6-6, 7-6, 6-2
Guillaume Raoux (France) bt Thomas Haas (Ger) 6-1, 6-1, 6-1
Guillaume Raoux (France) bt Mikael Tillander (Fin) 6-3, 7-5, 7-5
East African Zone Group 1, 2nd rd
Israel 3 Austria 0
Eyal Erlich (Israel) bt Bar (Aust) 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), 1-6, 6-4, 6-4
Eyal Erlich (Israel) bt Gerald Mandl (Aust) 6-1, 7-6 (7/4), 7-5
Eyal Erlich (Israel) bt Stefan Koubek (Aust) 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, 6-3
American Zone Group 1, 2nd rd
Argentina 2 Chile 1
Luis Lobo/Lucas Arnold (Arg) bt Mariano (Chil) 7-5, 6-3, 6-3
Francisco Squitieri (Arg) bt Hernan (Chil) 6-3, 6-4, 6-2
Mariano (Chil) bt Hernan (Arg) 6-3, 6-6, 6-5, 7-5
Exempt 2 Canada 1
Daniel Nestor/Sebastian Larsson (CAN) bt Andres Gomez (Ecu) 4-6, 6-4, 6-2, 6-3
Luis Adrian Morejon (Ecu) bt Daniel Nestor (CAN) 6-3, 7-6, 7-5, 6-2
Nicolas Lapentini (Ecu) bt Sebastian Larsson (CAN) 6-2, 6-3, 6-6, 6-3
Group 2 1st rd
Peru 3 Jamaica 0
Luis Horna/Miguel (Peru) bt Nicolas (Jamaica) 6-3, 6-2, 6-2

[illegible]

Russia's Marat Safin returns a backhand volley against Andre Agassi of the U.S. in the first round of the Davis Cup singles match at the International Tennis Center of Stone Mountain. (Reuters photo)

There was no reason to do what I did up 40-love and serving."

Cup for a country which came into the tie as firm underdogs.

Figure 1. The effect of the number of trials on the mean accuracy of the responses ($n = 10$) as a function of the number of items ($n = 8$). Error bars represent standard error of the mean.

TODAY AT	<small>CINEMA TEL: 5674344</small> PHILADELPHIA '1' <i>Yusra & Ilham Shahin ... in</i> DANTELLA <small>(ARABIC)</small> Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	<small>CINEMA TEL: 5674344</small> PHILADELPHIA '2' <i>Morgan Freeman & Ashley Judd ... in</i> KISS THE GIRLS Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	<small>CINEMA TEL: 5674344</small> PLAZA <i>The biggest cinema production</i> TITANIC Shows: 12:00, 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.	<small>CINEMA TEL: 5677420</small> CONCORD <small>TOP GUN - 11</small> <i>Kim Basinger... in</i> L.A CONFIDENTIAL Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:45 <small>TOP GUN - 12</small> <i>Adel Imam & Yusra ... in</i> RISALA ILA AL WALI <small>(ARABIC)</small> Shows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	<small>CINEMA TEL: 5934793</small> GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN GRAND OPENING TITANIC Shows: 5:15, 8:30 <i>The film is also on at 2.00 p.m. & 12:00 a.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays</i>	<small>CINEMA TEL: 5934793</small> GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN GRAND OPENING TITANIC Shows: 3:30, 7:00, 10:30 <i>The film is also on at 12:00 a.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays</i>	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 STARTING APRIL 6TH Don't Laugh Please We're Jordanian <i>Starring Hisham Yanes, Amal Dabbas, Rania Kurdi and the group</i> at 8:30 p.m. For reservations call: 4640155, 4625155
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SCOREBOARD

Davis Cup	
World Group first round	
USA 1 Russia 3 Sampras 6-2, 5-7, 6-1 (27), 6-4, 6-4 Andre Agassi (USA) bt Marat Safin (Rus) 6-3, 6-2, 6-3	6-1, 6-3, 6-3 Alejandro Aramburu (Per) bt Karl Hale (Jam) 6-4, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 Luis Horna (Per) bt Jermaine Smith (Jam) 6-1, 6-2, 7-6 (8/6)
Belgium 1 Netherlands 1 Phil Dewulf (Bel) bt Sjeng Schalken (Ned) 7-5, 6-2, 7-5 Jan Siemerink (Ned) bt Johan Van Herck (Bel) 6-4, 6-3, 4-6, 6-1	Uruguay 2 Paraguay 1 Marcelo Filippini/Gonzalo Rodriguez (Uru) bt Ramon Delgado/Ricardo Mena (Par) 6-3, 6-3, 1-6, 7-6 (8/6) Ramon Delgado (Par) bt Federico Dondo (Uru) 6-0, 6-3, 6-1 Marcelo Filippini (Uru) bt Ramon Mena (Par) 6-2, 6-1, 4-6, 6-1
Brazil 2 Spain 1 Gustavo Kuerten/Javier Panatta (Bra) bt Alex Corretja/Javier Sanchez (Spa) 6-1, 7-5, 6-6, 6-2 Alex Corretja (Spa) bt Fernando Meligeni (Bra) 4-6, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 Gustavo Kuerten (Bra) bt Carlos Moya (Spa) 5-7, 1-6, 6-4, 6-4	Venezuela 3 Guatemala 0 Jimmy Szymanski/Kepler Orellana (Ven) bt Daniel Chavez/Luis Valencia (Gua) 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 Kepler Orellana (Ven) bt Jacobo Chavez (Gua) 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 Jimmy Szymanski (Ven) bt Luis Perez (Gua) 6-0, 6-3, 6-4
Germany 3 South Africa 0 Boris Becker/David Prinosil (Ger) bt Andre Adams/Ellis Ferreira (RSA) 5-7, 6-4, 6-2, 6-1 Nicolas Pietrangeli (Ger) bt Grant Staden (RSA) 4-6, 4-6, 7-1, 6-2, 6-2 Thomas Haas (Ger) bt Wayne Ferreira (RSA) 7-6 (7/2), 5-6, 6-3, 6-4	Cuba 2 Haiti 1 Juan Pino/Lazaro Navarro Batles (Cub) bt Ronald Agenor/Jerry Joseph (Haiti) 6-4, 6-4, 2-6, 6-2 Ronald Agenor (Haiti) bt Armando Perez Guerra (Cub) 6-2, 6-2, 6-0 Lazaro Navarro Batles (Cub) bt Bertrand Madsen (Haiti) 7-6 (7/5), 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 4-6, 6-3
Australia 2 Zimbabwe 1 Mark Woodbridge/Dave Harty (Aus) bt Wayne Black/Byron Black (Zim) 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) Jason Stoltenberg (Aus) bt Wayne Black (Zim) 6-3, 6-4, 5-7, 7-5 Byron Black (Zim) bt Patrick Rafter (Aus) 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, 5-6 (7/0)	Asia-Oceania zone group 1 2nd rd
Slovakia 2 Sweden 1 Magnus Larsson/Mikael Tillstrom (Swe) bt Martin Hrbacek/Jiri Kousal (Slo) 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 Karol Kucera (Slo) bt Mikael Tillstrom (Swe) 1-6, 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 Daniel Hrbacek (Slo) bt Magnus Larsson (Swe) 7-6 (4/2), 3-6, 6-4, 6-2	Japan 3 New Zealand 0 Brett Steven/James Greenhalgh (NZ) bt Takao Suzuki and Satoshi Iwabuchi 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 Goichi Motomura (Jpn) bt Teo Susnjak (NZ) 6-0, 6-0, 6-0 Takao Suzuki (Jpn) bt Brett Steven (NZ) 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5), 7-5
Switzerland 2 Czech Republic 1 Marc Rosset/Martin Sarangoo (Sui) bt Martin Panatta/Jiri Novak (Cze) 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 Marc Rosset (Sui) bt Daniel Vacek (Cze) 6-0, 6-0, 6-0 Daniel Panatta (Cze) bt Marc Rosset (Sui) 6-2, 6-4, 6-4	Group 2 1st rd
Italy 2 India 1 Mahesh Bhupathi/Leander Paes (Ind) bt David Sangunetti (Ita) 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 Andrea Camanzi/Diego Nargiso (Ita) bt Mahesh Bhupathi/Syed Razvi (Ind) 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 Andrea Camanzi (Ita) bt Pratik Samant (Ind) 6-0, 6-2, 1-6, 6-2	Pakistan 3 Pacific Oceania 0 Mohammad Khaliq and Asim Shafiq (Pak) bt Lawrence Tere and Sanjeev Tikaram (Pacific Oceania) 7-5, 6-4, 6-2 Asim Shafiq (Pak) bt Lency Tenai (Pacific Oceania) 6-0, 6-1, 6-0 Mohammad Khaliq (Pak) bt Lawrence Tere (Pacific Oceania) 6-1, 7-5, 6-1
French League Cup	
Paris Saint Germain 2 Bordeaux 0 PSG win 4-2 on penalties	
Portuguese Championship	
S. Lisbon 2	Leca 0
Boavista Porto 3	Salgueiros Porto 0
Sporting Braga 1	Estrela Amadora 1
Farense 1	FC Porto 2
Romanian Championship	
S. Bucharest 5	D. Bucharest 0
FC National 3	Foresta Falticeni 0
Ogheul Galati 1	U. Craiova 1
Jiul Petrosani 2	Rapid Bucharest 6
CSM Resita 1	FC Bacau 1
U. Cluj 0	FC Arges 2
C. Piatra Neamt 1	Farul Constanta 0
S. Studentesc 1	Petrolul Ploiesti 2
Gloria Bistrita 1	Chindia Irgovist 1
Dutch League	
Maastricht 1	Heerenveen 2
Spanish Championship	
Real Madrid 0	Athletic Bilbao 0
Barcelona 2	Real Oviedo 0
D. La Coruna 2	Real Betis 1

French League Cup

Loko on the spot as PSG edge out Bordeaux

PARIS (AFP) — A nail-biting French League Cup final ended in victory Saturday for Paris Saint Germain in a penalty shootout before a sell-out 77,000 crowd at the Stade de France after the sides ended 120 minutes locked at 2-2.

Late substitute Patrice Loko, who has only recently returned to action following an indecency conviction last year and months of psychiatric treatment, coolly hit the winning penalty after Bordeaux had missed two of theirs.

It had earlier appeared Bordeaux were destined to take the trophy after Johan Micoud struck for the southwestern club on the half-hour, but Marco Simone saved PSG with a goal in the 80th minute after Bordeaux keeper Ulrich Rame had brilliantly saved a spotkick from PSG's Brazilian skipper Rai.

Simone, on hand to drive home from close range on that occasion, was then a centimetre away from winning the match when he struck a brilliant left-foot volley from outside the box against the crossbar.

In extra-time, a Lilian Laslandes header almost put Bordeaux back in front just when it seemed they had to crack under almost constant Parisian pressure.

Laurent Fournier, set up by Paul Le Guen, then fired straight at Rame at the other end as PSG missed yet another chance.

But PSG then did finally get their noses in front when a beautiful chipped pass from Loko at the start of the second period of extra time found the head of Rai, who rose majestically to nod home.

However, Bordeaux



Brazilian Rai, (L) captain of Paris St. Germain, holds up the trophy after his team won the final of the French League Cup at the Stade de France against Bordeaux. PSG won on penalties after the match finished in a 2-2 draw (Reuters photo)

were not finished and with six minutes left on the clock Papin curled a superb free kick over the wall and into the corner to take the match to penalties.

But the veteran striker

thereupon went from hero to villain as he blasted his kick over the crossbar.

Simone and then Loko made no mistake with theirs and PSG had captured the first silverware of the French season.

qualifying for the UEFA Cup in the process.

Joel Bats, PSG's assistant coach said afterwards: "This was very important match for both sides, and at this stage of the season it was vital to win it we're delighted."

Spirlea, Coetzer advance to Hilton Head final

HILTON HEAD (AFP) — Amanda Coetzer won two matches here Saturday to advance to the final of the \$926,000 Family Circle Cup, where she'll meet Romanian Irina Spirlea.

The ninth-seeded Spirlea claimed a 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (7/5) victory over Seles, the second straight day that both players were extended to a third-set tiebreaker.

On Friday against top-seeded American Lindsay Davenport, Spirlea rallied from a 6-3 deficit in the decisive tiebreak for the upset.

"We both had a tough match yesterday, too," Spirlea said. "I didn't even think about the tiebreaker I won yesterday. I was thinking just to play point by point."

On Saturday Coetzer was tied, 4-6, 7-6 (7/2) when her quarter-final opponent, unseeded German Andrea Glass, retired with a apparent pulled abdominal muscle.

The match had been postponed from Friday night because of rain.

Coetzer had less trouble in her semi-final, disposing

of American Lisa Raymond 6-4, 6-1.

"I mean, you never feel great when you win a match like that, but I have to admit that a day like today, where I had to play another match, I was really relieved," Coetzer admitted.

Still seeking her first title of the year, Coetzer also performed double duty Thursday, defeating Silvia Farina of Italy and Spain's Virginia Ruano Pascual to reach the quarter-finals.

"It was really tough, and it was the second time that it happened to me this week, so I wasn't feeling really good going into the match," she said. "But you just have to accept it and make the best of it."

It is the first final of 1998 for Coetzer and Spirlea. Before this event, neither player had gone further than Coetzer's semi-final showing at the Pan Pacific Open.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMMAM HIRSH
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THE PERILS OF DUPLICATE

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH	EAST
♠ 2	♠ Q J 3
♥ K 10 8 6 3	♥ Q J 8 5 4 2
♦ A K 10 3	♦ J 8 2
♣ 8 6 4	♣ 10

WEST	EAST
♠ K 10 9 7 5	♠ Q J 3
♥ Void	♥ Q J 8 5 4 2
♦ Q 9 7 6	♦ J 8 2
♣ 9 7 5 2	♣ 10

SOUTH

♠ A 8 6 4
♥ A 7
♦ 5 4
♣ A K Q J 3

The bidding:
SOUTH: 1♠, 2♠, 3♠, 4♠, 5♠, 6♠, 7♠, 8♠, 9♠, 10♠, 11♠, 12♠, 13♠, 14♠, 15♠, 16♠, 17♠, 18♠, 19♠, 20♠, 21♠, 22♠, 23♠, 24♠, 25♠, 26♠, 27♠, 28♠, 29♠, 30♠, 31♠, 32♠, 33♠, 34♠, 35♠, 36♠, 37♠, 38♠, 39♠, 40♠, 41♠, 42♠, 43♠, 44♠, 45♠, 46♠, 47♠, 48♠, 49♠, 50♠, 51♠, 52♠, 53♠, 54♠, 55♠, 56♠, 57♠, 58♠, 59♠, 60♠, 61♠, 62♠, 63♠, 64♠, 65♠, 66♠, 67♠, 68♠, 69♠, 70♠, 71♠, 72♠, 73♠, 74♠, 75♠, 76♠, 77♠, 78♠, 79♠, 80♠, 81♠, 82♠, 83♠, 84♠, 85♠, 86♠, 87♠, 88♠, 89♠, 90♠, 91♠, 92♠, 93♠, 94♠, 95♠, 96♠, 97♠, 98♠, 99♠, 100♠.

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Egypt, Palestinians slam Israeli credibility on peace

Erekat calls on U.S. to go public with proposals

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian and Palestinian officials on Sunday slammed Israel's credibility in the peace process and urged Washington to publish quickly its peace initiative to revive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The credibility of the Israeli positions is almost non-existent, that is why the Lebanese and Syrians are hesitating to enter into negotiations with Israel, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa told reporters.

Mr. Musa was speaking after talks with chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat to discuss the stalled peace talks and examine ways of breaking the deadlock.

Mr. Musa said the failure of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to implement the Oslo accords with the Palestinians was making Syria and Lebanon think twice before engaging in peace talks with the Jewish state.

Mr. Erekat warned that "any attempt to buy more time for the sake of Netanyahu will give him the pretext not to respect the agreements and not to implement them."

"This would be very dangerous for efforts to revive the peace process," he said.

He stressed it was up to the United States to prevent Israel from gaining more time by "publishing its initiative."

Mr. Musa also urged implementation of the 1996 Arab summit resolution which warned Israel that normalisation with the Jewish state largely depended on progress in the peace process.

"The resolutions of the Cairo summit are still effective and should be implemented," Mr. Musa said.

Asked if an Arab summit should be held to discuss the peace stalemate, he said: "An Arab summit is not the solution. The solution is Arab coordination."

Israel claims blast that killed Sharif proves Arafat not fighting terror

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu charged Sunday that the bomb explosion which killed a senior Hamas member in the West Bank last week was new proof that Palestinian police were not seriously fighting terrorism.

Mr. Netanyahu told the weekly meeting of his cabinet that the March 29 blast which killed the top bomb-maker of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) took place in an explosives factory which operated with impunity in the Palestinian-run city of Ramallah.

"As was proved in the recent case in which another bomb factory was discovered in Ramallah, right under the noses of the Palestinian Authority, there exists a widespread Hamas terrorist infrastructure in its territory against which the Palestinian Authority is not acting systematically," Mr. Netanyahu said, according to official minutes of the meeting.

"Due to the lack of such Palestinian activity, additional terrorist attacks are possible," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu said the police in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was taking "certain localised actions" to rein in Hamas, "but is not doing everything it needs to against terrorism."

Mr. Netanyahu also reaffirmed his government's categorical denial of any role in the death of the Hamas bomb-maker Mohieddin Sharif, whose body was found at the site of the blast.

Israel said Sharif was killed when a bomb he was building in a Hamas laboratory blew up prematurely.

A Palestinian autopsy however said Sharif was shot and his dead body dumped in a booby trapped car which was subsequently blown up by remote control.

Hamas and some Palestinian officials accused Israeli agents of murdering Sharif and then detonating explosives near his body to make it look like he died while building a bomb for use against Israel.

The armed wing of Hamas issued several statements last week vowing revenge against Israel.

Mr. Netanyahu made clear Sunday that Israel would hold the PNA responsible for any such attacks, especially after some Palestinian officials blamed Israel for Sharif's death.

"The Palestinian Authority understands the severity with which Israel would regard any attack against it in the wake of these empty charges," he said.

Israeli police and troops have been placed on high alert for possible Hamas attacks, with roadblocks set up around the main cities and extra patrols deployed in public places.

Ami Ayalon, head of the Shin Bet secret service, briefed the cabinet on the security measures, the cabinet statement said.

Soldiers found and dismantled a bomb overnight near a track used by Israeli troops guarding a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip.

Iranian minister meets with King Fahd

JEDDAH (AP) — In a further sign of improving ties, Iran's interior minister has met with Saudi Arabia's King Fahd.

The minister, Abdullah Nouri, relayed a message of thanks from Iranian President Mohammad Khatami for help extended to Iranian pilgrims, according to an Iranian source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Nouri, who is in Saudi Arabia to perform the annual pilgrimage, or Hajj, met with King Fahd and other officials Saturday night, the Al Riyadh newspaper reported Sunday.

Some 80,000 Iranians are performing the Hajj, which begins Monday.

Mr. Nouri arrived in Saudi Arabia last week at the invitation of his Saudi counterpart, Prince Nayef. He also met with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah and the Saudi defence minister, Prince Sultan.

Ties between the Tehran and Riyadh have been improving since Mr. Khatami, a moderate cleric, took office in August.



PALM SUNDAY IN POLAND: Parishioners in the village of Tokarnia near the southern Polish city of Krakow draw a life-sized figure of Jesus astride a donkey in an annual procession outside the church to celebrate Palm Sunday. The festooned poles, symbolising the palms with which Jesus was greeted as he rode into Jerusalem, achieve a height of up to five metres (Reuters photo)

Hebron settlers get more money to mark Israel's 50th jubilee

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The small community of zealous Jewish settlers in Hebron has received \$180,000 to organise festivities for Israel's 50th anniversary, more than double the sum originally budgeted, the Maariv newspaper reported Sunday.

The additional funds were provided to the West Bank city's 500 settlers by Israel's religious affairs ministry, the settlement department of the Jewish Agency and other government and quasi-state bodies, the newspaper said.

Earlier government plans to grant the Hebron settlers \$90,000 for the anniversary celebrations already drew criticism from anti-settlement groups and others who viewed the sum as excessive given recent cutbacks in government social and other spending.

Israel withdrew from 80 per cent of Hebron in January 1996 in line with autonomy agreements with the Palestinians, but its troops remain in control of the other 20 per cent where some 500 Jews live alongside 15,000 Arabs.

Hebron's settlers recently came under criticism from the Israeli army which accused radicals in the enclave of trying to provoke confrontations with Palestinians in the city of 120,000.

Festivities marking the 50 years since the state of Israel was created on May 14, 1948, began early this year and are due to climax with a series of events on April 30, the anniversary date according to the Hebrew calendar.

The government, struggling with a slowing economy and rising unemployment, slashed its overall budget for the festivities from \$50 million to \$30 million.

On Palm Sunday: Christians follow Jesus' path through Old City

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — With palm fronds poking out of their backpacks and video cameras in hand, streams of Christian pilgrims gathered at the top of the Mount of Olives on Sunday to trace the path of Jesus' final journey into Jerusalem.

"It would be a good day for Jesus to come back," said a buoyant Jeanne Jones, a Christian bookstore owner from Cashiers, N.C. "It's sunny and I'm here, and we're ready for him to establish a peaceful kingdom." Christian Arab children marched by carrying palm branches threaded with red and pink ribbons and carnations. A group of French nuns holding palm and olive branches sang hymns, as one nun rang out the melody on a set of chimes.

Keith Wurling, a 30-year-old divinity student from Chicago, took in the sights, leaning against a stone wall overlooking an Arab village where goats grazed on the green hillside.

"For me what is important is to participate in the spirit of a group of believers," he said. "I am here to walk those same steps in my life as I knew Jesus took here."

Palm Sunday marks Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem on a white donkey on the Sunday before his crucifixion, when his followers laid palm branches in his path. The day begins the Catholic Church's most solemn period, the week that ends with Easter next Sunday.

Other pilgrims gathered at the 800-year-old Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built on the site where Christians believe Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected. Some worshippers wept as they knelt before the site where Jesus' body was washed after it was taken down from the cross.

Sandra Kaufman of Portland, Ore., said she was sorry to see the commercialism at the site.

"I was disappointed to see people selling holy water and crucifixes inside the church," she said. "It just doesn't seem right to be selling such things at a holy site."

But Sister Winifred Wheeler of Grand Rapids, Mich., was not disappointed. Leaning on a walking stick wrapped with an olive branch, Sister Wheeler closed her eyes in wonderment.

"You feel this is the ground where Jesus was — this is it," she said. "You experience the passion more vividly. The bustle and bustle of the city did not stop when Jesus was crucified, and here we also hear that noise. It is not like the hushed church in Michigan."

Hewitt to sue to get Diana love letters back

LONDON (AFP) — James Hewitt, former lover of Diana, Princess of Wales, is ready to go to court to retrieve love letters the princess wrote during their five-year relationship.

"I will do everything in my power to get these letters back. They are my property. I have never attempted to sell them, show them off or use them at all," the former cavalry officer told The Sunday Telegraph.

The 62 letters were allegedly stolen by Mr. Hewitt's ex-fiancee, 39-year-old Anna Ferretti, who was questioned by police for 15 hours Saturday.

Thursday, the tabloid Mirror said Ms. Ferretti had taken the letters from Mr. Hewitt's home and was trying to sell them for 150,000 pounds (\$250,000).

"What she has done in taking the letters is appalling," Mr. Hewitt told the Sunday paper, adding that he may have been set up by Ms. Ferretti from the first time they met.

The paper said it took the letters and handed them over to the princess's former office without payment. The trustees of the estate have since refused to return the love notes to Mr. Hewitt.

Mr. Hewitt insisted that the letters were his property and that if necessary he would take the trustees to court.

"They cannot keep items stolen from my house," he added.

Diana admitted an affair with Mr. Hewitt between 1988 and 1992 when she was still married to Prince Charles. In a landmark 1995 television interview, the princess said she had "adored" him, but added that he had also let her down badly.



Prince Charles to sell organic carrots to neighbours

LONDON (AFP) — The heir to the British throne is to sell organically-grown carrots and potatoes from his kitchen garden to neighbours of his Highgrove estate in western England, The Observer said Sunday.

"Initially, it will be on a small scale. We are at an early stage at the moment," the paper quoted a spokesman for Prince Charles as saying.

"The whole point is to see how it goes, and if it takes off the plan will be to expand."

The vegetables will be grown without chemical fertilisers or insecticides, in line with the prince's recently-expressed criticism of intensive food production.

Aniston to lead voice in cartoon

LONDON (AFP) — Jennifer Aniston, she of hair and "Friends" fame, is expected to be the lead voice in a Warner Brothers cartoon of a children's classic.

According to The Times, Aniston will be signed up to play the female lead in a \$65 million animated screen version of "The Iron Man," written by British poet Ted Hughes in 1968. The book tells of a tractor-eating giant let down by the human race until he saves the world from a space dragon.

Aniston is currently in Britain filming scenes for the forthcoming episodes of the long-running television series "Friends."

Hugging and kissing trees — new method to avoid fines?

NEW YORK (R) — A New York city man who hugged and kissed a tree to avoid paying a fine might have to cough up the money after all.

NY newspapers reported that Daniele Malpeli was given a \$1,000 summons for chaining his bicycle to a tree. But Parks Commissioner Henry Stern offered Malpeli amnesty if he would apologise to the 2-1/2 story tall tree and give it a hug. "I hugged the tree 20 times and I kissed it too," Malpeli said.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, however, would have none of it. "This is how we are resolving fines, hugging trees? I think a judge is going to have to resolve this."

North American clean-up crew heads for Everest

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — A team of North American climbers left on Saturday on a mission to tidy up Mount Everest.

The 15-member environmental Everest expedition is the latest in a series of efforts aimed at removing some of the hundreds of oxygen canisters, fuel containers and batteries that other groups have left behind on the world's tallest mountain, team doctor Mark Cole said.

"We're going going to take it down off the mountain and then transport it by yak to the nearest roadhead," Cole told KCBS Radio.

Snake on board El Al

TEL AVIV (AP) — El Al is renowned for its strict security. But an unwanted passenger made it onto the airline's flight from Munich to Tel Aviv last week. Flight mechanics carrying out routine maintenance on the plane at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport found a small poisonous snake lounging between the cockpit and the bathroom.

El Al spokesman Nachman Klieman said Sunday, "The mechanics saw it and called a professional snake-catcher." Mr. Klieman said, "It was in plain view, on the floor." Mr. Klieman said the airline believes a human passenger smuggled the snake on board the plane in carry-on luggage. No one has claimed the snake.



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